SERMON MATTER

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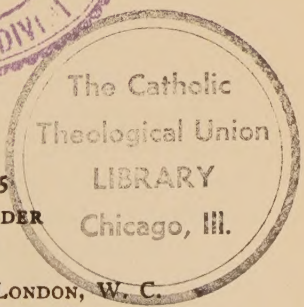
SERMON MATTER

By
REV. FERREOL GIRARDEY, C.SS.R.

WITHDRAWN

WITH PREFACE OF
VERY REV. THOMAS P. BROWN, C.SS.R.
PROVINCIAL OF THE ST. LOUIS PROVINCE



ST. LOUIS, MO., 1915
PUBLISHED BY B. HERDER
17 SOUTH BROADWAY

FREIBURG (BADEN)
GERMANY

LONDON, W. C.
68, GREAT RUSSELL STR.

The publication of the book entitled "Sermon Matter" by Rev. Ferreol Girardey, C. Ss. R., is hereby approved.

Thos. P. Brown, C. Ss. R.
Sup. Prov.

St. Louis, Dec. 8th, 1914

NIHIL OBSTAT

Sti. Ludovici, die 30. March 1915

F. G. Holweck,
Censor Librorum.

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IMPRIMATUR

Sti. Ludovici, die 31. March 1915

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Archiepiscopus
Sti. Ludovici.

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PREFACE

In his admirable treatise on "Preaching God's Word," the illustrious Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus, says, "It cannot be doubted that by the ministry of preaching the world has been converted from paganism to the faith of Jesus Christ." "How," exclaims the Apostle, "shall they hear without a preacher? Faith, then, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Rom. 10. 14–17. Our Blessed Redeemer commissioned His Apostles to carry the heavenly tidings of redemption and the message of Salvation to every human being, even those dwelling in the most distant parts of the world. "Going, therefore, into the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature." Mark 16. 15. The wonderful history of the propagation of the Faith, as the Holy Doctor declares, is strikingly illustrative of the power of the *word,* by which the Faith was carried and is still borne to the most remote regions of the earth. By the same means the precious gift of Faith is preserved and safeguarded against the subtleties of false philosophy, and the many dangers to which it is exposed from the attacks of Rationalism, Materialism and other forms of error that would dare usurp the place of God in the soul of man. To obtain in Heaven a crown of imperishable glory, it is not sufficient to know and believe the sacred truths of divine Revelation, it is, moreover, necessary that we live according to the maxims of Jesus Christ, as laid down in the Gospel. The faith Jesus imparted to us is a living faith, a faith that is productive of salutary works. By the ministry of the *word* we are reminded of the eternal truths and the obligations that emanate from them. The means of reaching eternal hap-

piness are pointed out to us. The duties of our state of life, within which state God wishes to sanctify and save our souls, are continually placed before our minds. In a word, our relationship to God, to ourselves and to our fellow men, is explained to us by a divinely appointed teacher, who instructs us how to regulate all our actions of the supernatural order, and make them tend to God, our last end. St. Paul commanded his disciple Timothy continually to instruct the people committed to his care. "Preach the word, be instant, in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine." 2 Tim. 4. 2. As Jesus Christ imposed the obligation of preaching upon His Apostles, so, too, He imposes the same upon all priests who are called to the office of preaching. The preaching of the word of God is one of the chief means by which a priest can save the souls of his people, and, by saving them, secure eternal happiness unto himself.

The press presents us frequently with splendid sermon-productions from the pen of eminent scholars and learned Theologians. Each claims its own special sphere of usefulness, each its own individual merit and scope of effective adaptability, but all contributing towards the spread and preservation of holy Faith, while emphasizing for us the importance of the "one thing necessary," and supplying us with the means conducive to a truly Christian life after the maxims and example of our divine model, Jesus Christ.

The present volume, entitled *Sermon Matter,* is the work of Rev. Ferreol Girardey, C.SS.R. The author has written and compiled various devotional works, all of which have been very favorably received. In the volume that he has just completed, the author has endeavored to furnish abundant *Sermon Matter* on the chief virtues and duties of the Christian life, the Love of God, and of our neighbor, discoursing at length on the sins opposed to those virtues and duties. The Sacrament of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist are thoroughly and effectively treated.

Lastly, the author has devoted careful attention to the explanation of the Seven Capital Sins. The work is brought to a devout and prayerful conclusion by a very instructive sermon on our Blessed Mother.

The volume is divided into five distinct series, each series containing a comprehensive elucidation of the special subject. This serviceable accession to the *Ministry* of the Word cannot fail to render valuable assistance to those who desire to review the subject-matter previously to the preparation of their discourses.

THOS. P. BROWN, C.SS.R.
Sup. Prov.
Feast of the Immaculate Conception.
St. Louis, Dec. 8, 1914.

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I. SERIES OF THE LOVE OF GOD

THE LOVE OF GOD. (No. 1)

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul and with all thy strength" (Deut. 6. 5).

An ancient hermit, who had spent many years in solitude, in prayer, fasting and work, at last was seized with the desire of acquiring learning, that he might be able thereby to make greater progress in the love of God. He therefore left his solitude and betook himself to a celebrated university to attend the lectures of its famous professors. Entering one of the lecture halls crowded with students from every country, he took a seat among them. A renowned professor mounted the lecture-stand and began his lecture with these words: "The question we shall discuss this morning is: Whether we should love God with our whole heart?" Hearing these words, the hermit, greatly astonished and scandalized, immediately left the hall, saying to himself: "How strange and foolish that any one, especially a learned professor, should consider as a doubtful and debatable question whether we are bound to love God with our whole heart! Why, do not the heavens, the earth and all creatures, and our very reason, our very heart clearly tell us, that we are bound to love God with our whole heart?" How well did that hermit reason! Nevertheless, although everything in and around them plainly tell men that it is their sacred and indispensable obligation to love God with their whole heart, it is necessary to admonish, exhort, urge and entreat them, nay, to threaten even Catholics, to induce them to love God!

I. God Has Every Title and Claim to Our Love.

1. In the first place, He commands us to love Him with our whole heart. He is our Creator, the Sovereign Lord

of heaven and earth, and it is, therefore, our most sacred, paramount and indispensable duty to obey Him in all things. And He insists that we should love Him. "What doth the Lord ask of thee, unless that thou fear the Lord thy God, and love Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul?" (Deut. 10. 12). "This is the greatest and the first commandment" (Mat. 20. 38). It is the greatest commandment, with regard to its antiquity, for it was written in the heart of man from his very creation. It is the greatest, with regard to its necessity. Without the love of God, or charity, all good works, all penitential works, all virtues, are useless for man's salvation. "If I have not charity, I am nothing, . . . it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13. 2, 3). With charity, with the love of God, even our indifferent actions contribute to our salvation. It is the greatest in extent, for it is binding on all mankind without exception; on the rich and on the poor; on the old and on the young; on the learned and on the unlearned; on the healthy and on the sick. No one is or can be dispensed from its obligation. It is the greatest in dignity, because it takes precedence over every other obligation, and its observance ennobles us more than that of every other duty. It is like the gold among the other metals, like the sun among the other heavenly bodies. It is a gold that enriches us, a fire that inflames us, a sun that enlightens us. It is the greatest in duration, for it embraces all times, all ages and eternity itself. In heaven there is no faith, no hope, no self-denial, no penance, but only charity, the love of God. It is the greatest in the facility of observance. No reason, no pretext can dispense us from loving God, for it is always in our power to love Him, even in the last moments of our life. To love God we need no learning, no wealth, no good health, no fine clothes, no strength, no beauty, no fasting, for this commandment "is near thee, in thy mouth, in thy heart" (Deut. 30. 14). It is the greatest in sweetness. In fact, nothing is more delicious than the

love of God, for as experience amply proves, it sweetens all hardships, all sufferings, all trials and crosses; it sweetened the very torments of the martyrs (for instance, those of St. Laurence roasting on a gridiron), and is the ineffable happiness of the denizens of heaven! On the other hand, how fearful the punishment of those who do not love God, such as the foolish virgins, to whom God says: "I know you not" (Mat. 25. 12); the reprobate, on the last day, will hear the divine Judge condemn them: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Mat. 25. 41).

2. God is so great that heaven and earth cannot contain Him. He is infinitely powerful, infinitely wise. How well has He made all things, and how wonderful and perfect His Providence, His care of His creatures, and especially of mankind! Infinite is His goodness and mercy; infinite, His justice. Infinite the beauty of Him who has made so many and such beautiful things! "He is," says St. Augustine, "infinitely more beautiful than all that He has made." God is so lovable, that in heaven eternity will not suffice to love Him as much as He deserves to be loved.

3. God is especially our God. "God is all ours," says St. Augustine; "He seems to be God only to belong to us." Daily does He bestow innumerable favors and benefits upon us. He gives us for our use all that He has made; it is He who has given us all that we are and all that we have. It was for us that He made heaven and earth, the air, the water, the plants and animals on the earth, and everything that is useful and beautiful in nature. How great was the joy of the queen of Saba, when she visited Solomon. "Seeing the house and the order of those ministering, she no longer had consciousness" (3 Kings 10. 4, 5), that is, she was beside herself, or so greatly amazed as to find no words capable of expressing her astonishment. But how happy and grateful she would have been, had all these things been provided for her! But what was the palace of Solomon compared to the whole universe! God can say to us: "Be-

hold I have given you all things" (Gen. 1. 29), for God does not need them for Himself. Let us briefly sum up God's gifts to us. He has given us our whole being, our life, our body, our soul, our senses and members and the use we can make of them; also our reason, our free-will, our heart. He has preserved our life every moment for so many years, from so many dangers and sufferings. And what is still more, He has bestowed upon us the inappreciable gift of the true faith and made us His children, His heirs in the kingdom of heaven, and enabled us so often to gain victories over the enemies of our soul! And when we had offended Him repeatedly, instead of punishing us as we deserved, He has borne with us in all goodness and mercy, and forgiven us and restored us to His friendship and to all claims as His heirs in His heavenly kingdom. Every moment of our life has been marked with special unmerited divine favors. What more could He have done for us than He has done? His love for us could go no further, for "thus hath God loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son" (John 3. 16). And His divine Son, "Jesus Christ loved us and delivered Himself for us" (Gal. 2. 20), to frightful torments and a most cruel and shameful death to save us from our sins and the eternal torments they deserved! The Son of God loved us so much, that, although He is almighty, He cannot love us more than He has done, for, as He Himself says, "Greater love than this no man hath, than that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15. 13); and Jesus laid down His life to save us sinners, His enemies!

Should not we, who naturally love creatures on account of some good quality or slight perfection, of benefits conferred on us, of their affection for us, love above all, with our whole heart, God, who is infinitely perfect, who is our Creator, our Benefactor, our most loving Father, who has loved us from all eternity with infinite love; who has, at the price of His blood, of His very life, rescued us from

hell, made us children of God, opened heaven for us and secured for us all the means we need to deserve and gain heaven! Hence we may truly say that he who will not love God deserves to be cast into the everlasting fire of hell among the demons! "If any man," says St. Paul, "love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. 16. 22). Let us reserve all our love for God, and not for creatures, for, according to St. Augustine, "heaven and earth, and all that they contain, are constantly crying out to us: 'Love not us, but love God only.'"

II. How We Should Love God. We should love God 1, as our Lord, 2, as our God, 3, as our Saviour, for He is our Sovereign Lord and Master, the only true God deserving of all our love, and our Saviour, who gave His life to save us and merited heaven for us. "If I ask any one," says St. Gregory, "'Do you love God?' he will surely answer, 'I do.'" That we possess some kind of love of God, is very probable. But not every kind of love is sufficient. We should, says the beloved disciple, "love not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3. 18); and we should love God as He requires us to love Him, that is, "with our whole heart, with our whole soul and with all our strength;" nothing less than that will satisfy our obligation of loving God. We must love God above all things; more than ourselves, more than all creatures. To do this, we must be willing to sacrifice, if necessary, all things for His sake, and refer to Him our thoughts, our words, our affections, our actions. God exempts from this law no part of our being; everything in us should be, as it were, permeated with His love. We may not love any one or anything in preference to God. Who loves God in this manner? Practically but few persons love Him thus. The commandment of the love of God requires that for His sake, 1, we be ready to make every sacrifice, 2, to undertake everything, and 3, to suffer all things.

1. In the first place, we are bound, whenever God de-

mands it, through His commandments, through the requirements of our state or station in life, to give up, to sacrifice everything, for God is the Sovereign Lord and Master of all things. Listen to St. Paul enumerating the sacrifices the love of God requires of us: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, . . . nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8. 35–39). Let us ask ourselves these questions of St. Paul and answer them sincerely. If we really love God, we shall endeavor to avoid all that displeases Him, and to do all He requires of us. What displeases God? All that is sinful, and only what is sinful. When we truly love some one, we do all we can to please him and avoid all that might displease him. Therefore he who breaks any of the commandments of God is wanting in the love he owes to God. "He that keepeth My commandments," says our divine Saviour, "he it is that loveth Me. . . . If any one love Me, he will keep My word. . . . He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words" (John 14. 21–24). (Enumerate various classes of sinners who break the commandments of God, to gratify their passions.) He who truly loves God longs to be in heaven to be with Him and share in His happiness. "If God were to propose to you," says St. Augustine, "to leave you forever on earth in the enjoyment of its goods, saying to you: 'You shall never behold Me in heaven,' would you be satisfied with this arrangement, and not long to enjoy God in heaven? If such a proposition would please and satisfy you, it would be a sign that you have not really begun to love God."

2. The love of God requires us to be ready to undertake everything we can for the glory of God. Merely thinking or saying that we love God, merely transitory feelings of

love for God, are no proof that the love of God dwells in us, for all this costs us nothing, demands no effort on our part. The true love of God is necessarily active, lively, courageous and capable of doing great, difficult things for God's sake. We must prove our love of God by acts, by daily acts; by our combats against the world, the devil and our evil inclinations, our passions; by our overcoming human respect. It must enable us to keep faithfully God's commandments and those of His Church, to fulfil the obligations of our state of life. Holy Scripture compares the love of God to a fire which burns and consumes everything sinful in us; to a seed which grows up and produces good fruit; to a root which sends sap and life to every part of the tree, of the plant; to living water which quenches our thirst for heavenly things and disgusts us with everything earthly and sinful. The love which ceases to act, ceases also to exist. Faith and hope, although they may be inactive in us, may still exist. But there is no charity without good works! To those who truly love God nothing is hard or impossible, but even the most difficult and disagreeable things become easy and agreeable. If this is true concerning natural love, it is still more so in divine love, as is fully proved in the lives of the saints.

3. He who truly loves God is willing to suffer all things for His sake. "Greater love than this no man hath, than to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15. 13). What the saints, for instance, Sts. Peter and Paul, the martyrs, suffered for the love of God! (Enumerate some of their sufferings.) What can we bear for God's sake? What do we, indeed, bear out of the love of God! "He that loveth not, abideth in death" (1 John 3. 14).

How many renounce the world and all things therein and consecrate themselves to God, to serve Him more faithfully, to save souls, to serve their neighbor in religious communities and hardships and continual sacrifices! No one on earth is happier than they. Hence St. Augustine

exclaims: "Thou, O Lord, art that sweetness by which all bitter things are sweetened!" Jesus Himself tells us: "My yoke is sweet and My burden light" (Matt. 11. 30). "It is better for me," said St. Bernard, "to embrace Thee, my God, in tribulation, than to be in heaven without Thee."

Let us truly love God above all things, with our whole heart, in this life, and thus begin to do now on earth what we are destined to do in heaven for all eternity.

THE LOVE OF GOD. (No. 2)

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10, 27).

1. MEANING OF THIS COMMANDMENT. The love of God is a gift of God conferred on us in baptism. He who loves God gives himself to God with all his heart as to the Supreme Good, so that by fulfilling His will he may please Him and be united to Him. "If any one loves Me," says our divine Saviour, "he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make our abode with him" (John 14. 23).

2. QUALITIES OF THE LOVE OF GOD. In the first place, the love of God, as a theological or Christian virtue, is supernatural, otherwise it would have no relation to life everlasting; and therefore it must be based on motives of faith, and not on merely natural motives. Secondly, our love of God must be sovereign, or supreme; it must surpass all other love. God, being the Supreme Being, our Creator and our last end, requires us to give Him the very first place in our heart. "He that loveth his father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10. 37). We may love other things, but we must love God more than them, and prefer Him to all else. Perez de Gusman was defending a besieged city. Rather than betray his country he resolutely refused to surrender, although the besiegers, parading his captured son before the walls of the city, threatened to put him to death, unless Perez would surrender. In like manner, rather than offend God, we must make every sacrifice, even the most difficult and painful. He who truly loves God is able to say with St. Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall

tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? . . . I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, . . . nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, . . . nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. 8. 35–39). Thirdly, our love of God should be efficient, that is, consist in acts or deeds, and not in mere words. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John 14. 21).

3. Motives for Loving God. Many persons look upon God as a strict, stern and very unamiable old man. And, nevertheless, God is loveliness and lovableness itself, for, in the first place, He is the supremely perfect Good. We naturally love whatever is good, whatever is perfect. But all the goodness, all the perfections that shine forth in creatures, however great they may be, are a mere shadow compared to the absolute goodness and infinite perfections of God. He is supremely good, supremely perfect. He is so good and so perfect, that it is impossible for Him to be more good and more perfect than He really is. God first loved us, for He has loved us as long as He is, that is, from eternity! His love for us, moreover, has always been infinite or boundless, and without any merit or claim on our part. He is infinitely happy in Himself, and therefore has no need of us, nor of our love. And, nevertheless, what great and countless benefits has He not, out of His infinite goodness and love for us, lavished upon us! All that we have and all that we are, are His gratuitous gifts to us. He is our greatest Benefactor. "Let us, therefore, love God, because God hath first loved us" (1 John 4. 19). For us He created heaven, He made us His children, and destined us, as His heirs, to share forever His own happiness. Thirdly, God, our Creator, our Sovereign Lord, demands our love; insists on it: "And now what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart and with all thy soul?" (Deut. 10. 12). He promises heaven with all its endless joys to those who love Him, and threatens those who will not love Him with the everlasting fire of hell. Fourthly, we owe to God all our love for giving us His divine Son as our Redeemer, our Saviour; and we owe all our love to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for becoming man, teaching us how to save our souls and suffering and dying for us on the cross to enable us to save our souls and merit the eternal reward of heavenly bliss. Could God do more for us to manifest His boundless love for us, sinners? Behold the crucifix! It tells us how much His love for us has cost Him! Look at the tabernacle, in which Jesus Christ, out of love for us, dwells among us as our best Friend, as the nourishment of our souls! Look at heaven, where He has prepared for us ineffable and inconceivable enjoyments which will forever satisfy all our desires! And then tell me what more can God do for us to testify His excessive love for us and to win our love?

4. Our Love of God May Be Either Perfect or Imperfect. It is perfect, if we love God for His own sake only, and not for our sake or benefit. Our love of God is imperfect, if there is any selfish motive in it; for instance, if we love God for His benefits towards us. Perfect love of God has the power to obtain God's forgiveness for even mortal sins, however numerous and heinous they may be, if it is joined to the resolution to confess them. The same effect is attributed to an act of perfect contrition, because perfect contrition necessarily includes perfect love of God.

5. When Should We Make Acts of the Love of God? It is customary for good Catholics to make daily at least once or twice the acts of faith, hope and charity. We make an act of the love of God explicitly when we say: "O my God, I love Thee," or use similar words; but we make such acts implicitly, that is, when we say or do something that implies or includes the love of God; for instance,

every time we pray devoutly, hear Mass, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, make an act of patience or resignation to God's holy will in our trials, in time of sickness, and whenever we make a good intention, such as, "All for the love of Thee, O my God;" also when we show our gratitude towards God and thank Him for His benefits. We are obliged to make an act of the love of God, at least implicitly, whenever we receive a sacrament. We should especially make acts of the love of God in our dying moments; also whenever we are in danger of death.

6. How to Acquire and Increase in Us the Love of God. First, we should avoid sin and its occasion; not only mortal sin, but even all wilful venial sin. Secondly, we should faithfully and fervently perform all our religious duties; thirdly, go frequently to confession and holy Communion; fourthly, daily in the morning make a good intention to please God in all we do, and renew this good intention often during the day; fifthly, often reflect on God's goodness towards us and the motives we have for loving Him with all our heart; sixthly, bear all trials and sufferings with patience and resignation for the love of God; seventhly, frequently look at the crucifix and consider how much Jesus Christ has loved us; and finally, pray God to impart to us and increase in us His love, and daily make in our heart many acts of the love of God, and renew our resolution to suffer every pain and trial rather than offend God.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

"I judge not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2. 2).

What does all our knowledge, all our science amount to, if we do not know Jesus Christ? We may be well versed in poetry and literature, in mathematics, in philosophy, in the fine arts, in politics and the science of government, but if we lack the knowledge of Jesus Christ crucified, we are like travelers without light, without means of conveyance, like pupils without a competent teacher. No study is more necessary to us than that of Jesus crucified. If we know Him, we know all it behooves us to know. The great apostle possessed a thorough knowledge of this all-important science, and labored with all his might to impart it to all mankind. By His ministry Jesus Christ is our Saviour, and by His conduct He is our Model. Therefore we should, first lovingly hope in Him, and secondly, imitate Him.

I. Jesus Christ is Our Saviour, Our Redeemer.

He alone deserves this title, for, says St. Peter, "there is no salvation in any other" (Acts 4. 12). He became our Redeemer, first, by making superabundant satisfaction for our sins and thereby freeing us from the slavery of Satan. Adam and his posterity had, through his sin, lost the divine grace and friendship and all right to heaven. Not even all creatures combined could have sufficiently atoned for that sin, or for any other sin. The only-begotten Son of God, infinitely holy and perfect, infinitely beloved by the Father, undertook to atone for the sins of the human race. Loving men, as it were, to excess, He took their punishment upon Himself. He assumed a body and soul like ours, was born, wept, labored and preached, underwent persecu-

tion; was betrayed into the power of His enemies, arrested, was struck and bruised, underwent unjust trials, was fearfully scourged, loaded with insults and mockery, abandoned by all, and even by His heavenly Father; and after shedding all His blood, He died the cruel and ignominious death of the cross, thereby appeasing the heavenly Father's wrath against mankind, expiating all their sins, subduing the powers of hell and opening heaven to men.

Had Jesus Christ been only God, He could not have suffered all this; had He been merely man, all His sufferings and His death would have proved an insufficient atonement for the sins of men. What a terrible evil must sin be, since it required so great an atonement! The boundless humiliations and horrible sufferings of the Son of God made man tell us the infinite love God bears us, since "He did not spare even His own Son, but delivered Him for us" (Rom. 8. 32), as well as the infinite love of the Son of God for us in taking our sins upon Himself and expiating them at such a cost to Himself!

Secondly, Jesus Christ became our Redeemer by deserving for us the precious graces of salvation. "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1. 17). We are all inclined to evil, and there is no crime so great, so abominable which we would not commit, were we not restrained by divine grace. Jesus Christ, by His passion and death, obtained for us all the graces we need to overcome temptation, the assaults of the world, of Satan and of our own passions, to bear every cross and trial, every suffering, to overcome every obstacle to our salvation, to practise even the most difficult acts of virtue and to sanctify ourselves by leading a holy life, so much so, that St. Paul declares: "Where sin abounded, grace abounded still more" (Rom. 5. 20); so much so that the greatest sinners can, by the graces Jesus has gained, become great saints. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4. 13). The power of the sacra-

ments, of prayer and of the other means of salvation, is derived entirely from the merits of Jesus Christ's passion and death.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ became our Redeemer, our Saviour by deserving heaven for us. Every one in heaven will enjoy perfect happiness according to his capacity, for Jesus Christ says: "In My Father's house there are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again to take you to Myself, that, where I am, you also may be" (John 14. 2, 3). Jesus Christ, although He is now in heaven, still performs the office of our High Priest, of our Advocate and Mediator, of our loving Father. By His Passion and death He acquired for us a right to heaven and its unspeakable happiness. This is another testimony of His love for us, since He wishes us to be where He is and to share His happiness and glory. How ardently, then, we should love Him and confide in Him! "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord" (Ps. 143. 15). Happy are we, if we lovingly trust in Him, but more happy still if we take

II. Jesus Christ as Our Model.

All Christians are bound under pain of eternal damnation to imitate Jesus Christ as their Model. St. Paul expressly declares, that only those are saved who are "conformable to the image of the Son of God" (Rom. 8. 29). It behooves us, then, to imitate His charity, full of patience, meekness, compassion and zeal for our neighbor, His modesty, purity, love of prayer, His patience, His obedience and resignation to the divine will, and to practise self-denial and carry our cross after Him. The sources of sin in the world are, says the beloved disciple, "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John 2. 16). The conduct of Jesus Christ will teach us how to combat these sources of sin.

1. In the first place, the poverty practised by Jesus Christ

teaches us contempt for mere worldly riches. We are destined to possess God Himself. By sin we lost God, but not our desire for perfect happiness. Men mostly seek this happiness in the acquisition, the accumulation and in the enjoyment of worldly goods. Our divine Saviour, however, on becoming man, chose a mother poor in this world's goods, a poverty-stricken place for his birth, a life of labor in poverty, and died bereft of every earthly possession. "The example of Jesus Christ," says St. Augustine, "is for us the most efficacious medicine for the cure of our attachment to earthly goods; the avarice, or undue seeking of wealth which cannot be healed by the example and consideration of Christ's poverty, is simply incurable." His example teaches the poor to be contented with their poverty for His sake, for "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5. 3).

2. Jesus Christ, by His humility teaches us the flight of worldly honors. He was humble in His Incarnation, in choosing a poor Virgin as His Mother, and a stable in an obscure town as His birth-place, in working as a poor carpenter, in allowing the devil to tempt Him, in His sufferings and ignominious death. Hence He says to us: "Learn of Me," not to create the world, to perform wonders or raise the dead to life, but "because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11. 29). Hence St. Augustine says: "What can heal our pride, if the humility of Christ fails to do it?"

3. Jesus Christ by His sufferings condemns our sensuality and love of pleasure. (Enumerate here His hardships, labors and sufferings from His birth to His death.) "What can heal our sensuality and yearning after good cheer and pleasure, if the sufferings and austere life of Jesus Christ fail to do it?" "Christ," says the Prince of the apostles, "died for us, leaving you an example, that you may follow His footsteps" (1 Pet. 2. 21). On judgment-day we shall all appear in presence of the poor, humble and

suffering Jesus! Woe to us, if our life is not found conformable to His! We shall be asked to show our charity and zeal towards our neighbor, our purity, our humility, obedience, detachment from worldly goods, honors and pleasures, our self-denial, meekness and patience, our forgiveness of injuries. The blood He shed, His death, His infinite merits will not avail us, if we do not imitate Him, as was prescribed to us: "Look and make according to the pattern shown you in the mount" (Exod. 25. 40). To us He said: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14. 6).

Let us be true Christians, true disciples and followers of Jesus Christ. Let us love Him alone, and not the world nor its riches, honors and pleasures, for what has the world done for us, and what can it give us, when this life is over? Let us love and imitate Jesus Christ, our God, our Redeemer, our Benefactor who has suffered and died for us, and who alone can make us happy here and hereafter. Let us be ready to sacrifice all for His sake and thus become worthy of forever sharing His happiness and glory in heaven. Amen.

THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

"If any one love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. 16, 22).

The motives for loving our divine Saviour are so great, so irresistible, that St. Paul does not hesitate to condemn to eternal perdition those who will not love Him, for they are guilty of the foulest ingratitude. The benefits conferred on mankind by Jesus Christ are so great and numerous, that our heart must be either of ice or of stone, if we can refrain from loving Him with all our heart. The principal motives for loving Him are drawn from

I. His Incarnation.

The Son of God, who is eternal, infinitely perfect, became man by assuming our human nature, a body and soul like ours; He was born a helpless child in a stable, and led for thirty years the poor, obscure, laborious and humble life of a mechanic, unknown, unhonored by those He had come to save. And why did the Son of God so humble himself? For the salvation of sinful and ungrateful mankind.

II. His Passion and Death.

"Greater love than this no man hath, than that he lay down His life for His friends" (John 15. 13). For us, who were not His friends, but His enemies by our sins, He sacrificed everything, His goods, His body, His honor, all His blood, His very life on a gibbet of infamy! Could love go any further? And yet men instead of loving and thanking Him, continue to insult Him, hate and outrage Him daily, hourly!

III. The Blessed Eucharist.

What should astonish us even more than His sufferings and death for us ungrateful sinners, is the infinite, incomprehensible love He manifests to us in the Blessed Eucharist. His love for us is so great, that it would seem that He could not be happy without us. Love, intense love, tends to intimate union with the beloved, to remain constantly with the beloved, to become, as it were, one with the beloved. And this is what Jesus does most wonderfully in our regard in the Blessed Eucharist. In order to remain always near us, to be always among us, to unite Himself most intimately with us and, as it were, inseparably from us, He has, in some manner, humbled Himself in the Blessed Eucharist more than in the Incarnation, more even than in His ignominious death on the cross. In the Incarnation and on the cross Jesus hid only His divinity, but in the Eucharist He conceals even His humanity, and constantly exposes Himself to every kind of insult and outrage, such as want of faith, of reverence, indifference, insults and all kinds of profanation. And who are we, that He should so ardently desire our love? We are but poor, helpless, imperfect, miserable, sinful creatures. And it is out of His tender love of such wretched creatures, that the Son of God has, so to speak, exhausted His power and His love in the Blessed Eucharist! What more can we desire of Him? The great wonder in the Eucharist is not so much God's power, as His excessive and incomprehensible love for us miserable and ungrateful creatures!

IV. How We Should Repay Our Saviour's Boundless Love for Us.

1. First, by an unlimited confidence in Him. In all that He has done for us, and in all the crosses and trials that beset our path in life, we should put all our trust in Him, for He seeks only our welfare. Therefore, whatever may

happen to us, let us say, like the mother of Samson: "If the Lord had a mind to kill us, He would not have showed us all these things" (Judges 13. 23). Since His mercy and love in our regard have no bounds, our confidence in Him also should know no bounds.

2. We owe our divine Saviour our inmost gratitude. But how different is our conduct in His regard! We continue to offend Him daily, preferring our own ease and comfort, our worldly interests, the gratification of our passions to keeping His commandments, to seeking to please Him. Let us apply to ourselves the stinging rebuke Jesus addressed to the Jews who had taken up stones to stone Him to death: "Many good works have I shown you from My Father; for which of those works do you stone Me?" (John 10. 32).

3. We owe our divine Saviour the most tender and constant love. Our love for Jesus should be like that of the martyrs; sovereign, generous and self-sacrificing. Like them we should be ready to do all, to suffer all, to sacrifice all, even our very life, for His sake. We should so conduct ourselves as to be able to say with St. Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am sure that . . . no creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8. 35–39).

4. Another means of repaying the love of the Son of God for us is daily to consider, to reflect on the ineffable love Jesus bore us in His humiliations, in His passion and death, and in all the gifts He has bestowed upon us, and to make frequent ejaculatory prayers, especially acts of sorrow for sin, of divine love, of gratitude.

5. Devout assistance daily, if possible, at holy Mass. Also frequent fervent holy Communion, even daily if it is in our power. A spiritual Communion renewed often during the day.

6. A daily visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in

which we should pour out our ardent love for Him. We should long to be often with Him, to remain in His presence as long as we can, where we can tell Him of our troubles, of our wants, of our love for Him, in the same manner as a little child tells these things to his mother. We are ignorant; but He will instruct us; we are weak, but He will strengthen us; we are sinful, but He will sanctify us; we are cold or lukewarm in the service of God, but He will inflame us with fervor and divine love, and enable us to serve Him faithfully to the end of our life.

THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John 3, 14, 15).

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John 12. 32).

I. Our Lord Jesus Christ became our Redeemer by fulfilling the figure of the brazen serpent erected by Moses in the desert, the sight of which cured those that had been bitten by the fiery serpents in punishment of their murmurs against God for having brought them into the desert. Our divine Saviour spoke the words of my text to Nicodemus three years before its accomplishment. When the time of the fulfilment of His prophecy was drawing near, Jesus was teaching in the temple. He had just spoken of the grain of wheat which cannot become fruitful unless it first dies in the ground. Having said this, He addressed His heavenly Father in these words: "Father, glorify Thy name." Then "a voice therefore came from heaven: I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again. The multitude, therefore, that stood and heard, said that it had thundered. Others said: An angel hath spoken to Him. Jesus answered and said: This voice came, not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John 12. 28–32).

II. How improbable did these last words then seem! Much more improbable did they appear a few days later, when Jesus was actually raised up on the cross between two thieves to die in infamy, accursed in Himself and in His memory! But as is customary with God, He always

chooses the most inadequate and totally unsuitable means, from a natural aspect, to achieve most astounding and unexpected results, and therefore "Christ's infamy" thenceforth became the powerful instrument to "draw all things to Himself!" A man's power does not survive him, for it is wholly extinguished in the tomb. But with Jesus Christ His power becomes manifest only in death. Whilst hanging on the instrument of death and infamy, He drew to Himself the good thief and the soldiers on guard. After His resurrection and ascension He began to draw all men to Himself, beginning with the poor and the lowly, and the illiterate, and continuing with the learned, the great and the powerful, until idolatry was extirpated and the world believed in Him. Later on, when the barbarians destroyed the Roman power and civilisation, He enabled His Church to humanize and christianize the barbarians, and to impart to them a more noble civilisation, the Christian civilisation, the fruits and the benefits of which the world even now still enjoys. Ever since Jesus was lifted up on the cross, He has drawn to Himself

1. First, man's thought. All who embrace the faith He taught, submit their reason to the infallible guidance of His Church, and, on her authority, firmly believe mysteries incomprehensible to reason. No one else has ever been able thus to draw, subjugate and govern man's thought.

2. Secondly, man's will. For 1900 years hundreds of millions of freemen, cherishing liberty above every other natural possession, have had no other will than that of Jesus Christ, and have cheerfully submitted theirs to His laws, commands and restraints. With Him they become meek and humble of heart, deny themselves, joyfully take up His yoke on themselves, crucify their flesh and its lusts, chastise and subdue their bodies, lest they rebel against the will of Jesus Christ. In order to be wholly His, to devote themselves to His service, they heroically forsake all that is dear to them, parents, relatives, possessions,

bright prospects and country, and embrace a life of poverty, chastity, obedience and labor among the poor, the heathen, the sick, and even among the very outcasts of society, for the love of Him who, from His cross draws to Himself their hearts, their chaste love and unreserved devotedness. These heroic souls can truly say with St. Paul: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross, and I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2. 19, 20).

3. Man's heart. Jesus lifted up on the cross has drawn and conquered man's love. Ever since then numberless pilgrims in all ages visit and venerate in the Holy Land every spot hallowed by His presence, especially His sepulchre. The Crusades of the Middle Ages fulfilled the prophecy of Isaias (11. 10): "His sepulchre shall be glorious." None of the great men whom the world has produced, have gained the love of mankind. The very idea that such men as Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Plato, Demosthenes, Napoleon have any hold on the affections of mankind is enough to excite our laughter! But Jesus Christ "lifted up" has won the hearts of the best portion of mankind. The best, the purest, the most virtuous the world has ever produced have loved Jesus Christ crucified, with the tenderest and the most devoted love, more than their parents, more than their children, more than their dearest friends and companions, more than their own selves, and have ever been ready to sacrifice, for His sake, all their goods and their very life, as is evident from history itself. And even more, for they consider it the greatest honor and happiness to be accounted worthy of suffering and dying for the love of Jesus crucified! The very sight of the picture or representation of "Jesus lifted up on the cross," *the crucifix,* excites their tenderest love, for with how great fervor, ardor and devotedness do they not impress kisses on His sacred wounds! In fact, there is no love comparable in intensity, constancy and fruitful effects to the love of Jesus crucified "in the hearts He has

drawn to Himself." That love draws tears of contrition and amendment from the sinner, imparts peace, consolation and cheerfulness to the suffering, to the sorely tried, and strength and constancy to the martyrs, to the penitents. The martyrs consider it an honor, a happiness, surpassing all earthly honors and enjoyments, to suffer the most exquisite torments, the most cruel death for the love of Jesus crucified. Both the innocent and the penitent experience a heavenly sweetness in meditating, even for hours at a time, on the love of Jesus who, for their sake, endured so many insults and pains and was "lifted up" and died so ignominious a death.

And where is the dying Catholic who does not most willingly endure his great pains and accept his approaching death calmly and cheerfully in union with the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ crucified, and depart this life with love and confidence, whilst pressing to his lips the image of his crucified Saviour? The calm and consoling deaths of Catholics, sweetened by the love of Jesus crucified, are the admiration of non-Catholics, who know not how to account for them. They are, however, a clear proof of the fulfilment of our divine Saviour's prophecy: "And I, when I shall be lifted up, will draw all things to Myself."

4. Man's body. Man is naturally averse to bodily sufferings and mortifications, to deny his body the things it craves for. And, nevertheless, the love of Jesus "lifted up," after "drawing men's hearts to Himself," induces them to become the declared enemies and tormentors of their flesh by fasting, abstinence, coarse food, numerous austerities and penances, and by making and faithfully keeping the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. For the love of Jesus crucified multitudes give up what is dearest to them; and all renounce many comforts and pleasures of life, and devote themselves to works of charity and zeal with self-sacrificing love. The sight of this made

so deep an impression on the great Napoleon, that he did not hesitate to say: "Unlike human conquerors, Jesus Christ conquers, not for a time, not merely a few nations, but the whole human race, and He will conquer it to the end of time. Jesus Christ conquers in every individual believer that which is most difficult to subjugate, his heart, his love! For His sake millions have joyfully undergone martyrdom, and still undergo the most painful privations. He will live forever in millions of hearts." And this in the hearts of the best, the purest, the noblest and the most enlightened of mankind! This is evident from the consecration of the world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1875 and 1901.

Let us daily raise our eyes to Jesus "lifted up" on the cross out of love of us, and allow Him to draw to Himself our minds, by practically adopting His teaching concerning the vanity of earthly goods, honors and pleasures; our wills, our hearts, our love, our bodies, by cheerfully denying ourselves, for His sake, whatever is displeasing to Him, by willingly making every sacrifice, however great, long and painful, if it proves necessary to manifest our love for Him, to serve Him faithfully, and thus to secure for our souls the benefits of the Redemption both in this life and in the next. Amen.

GRATITUDE TO GOD

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within thee bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all that He hath done for thee" (Ps. 102. 1, 2).

God is our Father and our greatest Benefactor. We owe Him all that we have, all that we are. Wherefore it is our sacred duty not only to feel grateful to Him for His numberless and priceless benefits, but also to acknowledge them and show Him our gratitude for them.

1. It is God who has created us out of His pure, gratuitous love, and given us our body with its senses and members, and our immortal soul, made after His own image and likeness, and endowed it with its wonderful faculties. He has preserved us and loaded us with benefits all the years we have lived. What should we be, if God had deprived us, as has happened to so many of our fellow-men, of some of His gifts, such as sight, hearing, speech, power of motion, strength, the use of our reason? We should have no reason to complain of it. But how grateful we should be to Him, for not having deprived us of them. Moreover, God has destined us to share forever His own happiness in heaven.

2. It is God the Son who has redeemed us from sin, from the power of the devil and from hell, by His sufferings and death. To Him we owe the gift of the true faith, that most precious of gifts, without which all His other gifts would not avail us for our salvation. He has restored to us sanctifying grace, and made the members of our body the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6. 19), and our bodies members of Himself (v. 15), and enabled us to merit heavenly bliss. For the forgiveness of our sinful

ingratitude in offending Him and thereby deserving the torments of hell, He instituted the sacrament of penance, and to enable us to overcome the enemies of our salvation and lead a life worthy of Him, whose disciples and members we are, He instituted the sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist in which He becomes the heavenly, strengthening and vivifying food of our soul, and gives us audience whenever we wish, grants us all we ask Him, and protects us against all our enemies. "O God, my deliverer from my enemies. . . . Therefore will I give glory to Thee, O Lord." (Ps. 17. 48, 50.)

3. Just as a child is in duty bound to thank his parents for all that he receives from them, so we also should thank God for His benefits. "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord" (Ps. 115. 3, 5). "We are bound," says St. Paul, "to give thanks always to God" (2 Thess. 1. 3). "Giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and to the Father" (Eph. 5, 20). "Since there is not a single moment," says St. Bernard, "when we do not enjoy God's benefits, there should not be a single moment in which we do not think of and thank God." "God demands our gratitude, not as if He needed it," says St. John Chrysostom, "but that we may deserve and obtain fresh benefits from Him." The more grateful we are to God, the more numerous and great will be the graces and gifts He will bestow upon us. "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains; and you shall say in that day: Praise ye the Lord and call upon His name" (Is. 12. 3).

4. Our divine Saviour Himself taught us, by His example, to thank God for His benefits, for hearing our prayers. "I thank Thee, O Father, because Thou hast heard Me" (John 11. 41). The apostles also showed their grati-

tude to God, by thanking Him for His benefits. St. Paul repeatedly insists on the duty of thanking God: "In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning all" (1 Thess. 5. 18). But we fail in the honor we owe to God, for how neglectful we are in thinking on God's gifts to us, and on our obligation to thank Him for them with the persuasion of our own helplessness, of our total dependence upon Him. Gratitude is also an inducement and a help to make a proper use of His benefits, to combat sin; it also imparts to us confidence to receive future benefits, whenever we may need them. Thanking and praising God for His gifts is not only pleasing to Him, but also commanded by Him for our own benefit, and not because He Himself has any need of our gratitude. Our holy Mother the Church daily calls upon us, before the beginning of the Canon of the Mass, by the mouth of the priest: "Let us give thanks to our God: It is meet and just. It is truly meet and just, right and salutary that we should always give Thee thanks, O holy Lord Father almighty and eternal, through Christ our Lord." Hence it is our duty daily to thank God for His benefits, because He daily bestows numberless benefits upon us both in the order of nature and in the order of grace. Let us never forget that of ourselves we are helpless; hence our divine Saviour says: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15. 5).

5. Our daily gratitude to God should consist, first, in a lively remembrance of God's benefits, the most of which we fail to notice, to remember, duly to appreciate, because they are of daily occurrence, such as health, the use of our senses; secondly, we should often recall our unworthiness of God's favors, on account of our sins and our carelessness and tepidity in His service; and thirdly, we should consider, especially, the infinite value of His daily graces, which are the price of the blood of Jesus Christ.

6. "Since there is not a single moment when we do not

enjoy God's benefits," says St. Bernard, "there should not be a single moment in which we do not think of and thank God." But our gratitude to God should not consist in mere words; it should be like that of the grateful child. The truly grateful child shows his gratitude to his parents by something more than mere words, by his obedience and good conduct. Hence St. Augustine says: "He who wishes always to praise and thank God as he should, must perform his actions well, for they will then be a true praise of God." Elsewhere the same saint says: "Acknowledge that of thyself thou art and hast nothing good, so that thou shalt feel urged to be grateful to God." Let us also often think on the passion of Jesus Christ, and we shall learn therefrom the infinite debt we owe Him and be induced not only to be grateful to Him but also to love Him with all our heart. "We should," says St. Paulinus, "return our thanks and our love to Jesus Christ for all the sufferings and insults He endured for us." This should impel us to accept all that God sends us, whether it be good or evil. "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" (Job 2. 10). "Always thank God," says St. John Chrysostom, "whether good or evil happens to you; if evil, it will be profitable to you (through your patience and resignation); if good, it will remain good."

GOOD WORKS

"Turn away from evil and do good" (Ps. 33. 15).

These few words comprise our whole duty on earth. No one denies the necessity of avoiding evil, or sin, for no one considers sin as a means of salvation. Common sense, agreeing with St. Paul, tells us that they who commit grievous sins shall not enter heaven. On the other hand, there are some persons who, practically, do not admit the necessity of good works for salvation, and seem to think that to deserve heaven it is sufficient to be honest and abstain from stealing and committing murder. But faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebr. 11. 6). Before ascending to heaven our divine Saviour sent His apostles to preach to all nations and required all men to believe and accept their teaching and become members of His Church, and this as an indispensable means of salvation (Mark 16. 15, 16).

Not every kind of faith, however, is a saving faith, for St. James expressly says that our faith must be a living faith, accompanied by, or rather producing corresponding good works, in order to be a saving faith. "What shall it profit," he says, "if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall (such a) faith be able to save him? . . . Faith, if it hath not works, is dead in itself. . . . Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. . . . Even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (James 2. 14, etc.). Just as a dead body, a corpse, cannot do anything, is utterly powerless, so also a dead faith, that is, a faith devoid of accompanying good works, is powerless to

save, or to effect anything for our salvation. Consequently, good works are absolutely necessary for salvation.

Our divine Saviour demands of us good works. "Unless your justice shall abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 5. 20). "Do ye worthy fruits of penance" (Mat. 3. 8). "I am the vine and you are the branches; he that remaineth in Me, produceth much fruit; every branch that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be taken away" (John 15. 5, 2), "shall be cast into the fire" (Luke 3. 9), "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5. 16). "I have chosen you, that you may bring forth fruit" (John 15. 16). "Show thyself in all things an example of good works" (Tit. 2. 7). "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Mat. 6. 10). At the general judgment the good will be rewarded for their good works, and the wicked condemned to everlasting fire for having neglected good works (Mat. 25).

Good works are the necessary means of salvation. Heaven is a reward bestowed only on the deserving. It is the wage of the faithful laborer in God's vineyard. Every man shall be rewarded according to his works (Mat. 16. 27; Rom. 2. 6; Eccli. 16. 15). Our divine Saviour compares Himself to a king setting out on a journey and distributing certain sums among his subjects, or servants, and telling them to trade with them until his return; and on his return demanding an exact account from each, and rewarding those who derived profit therefrom, and punishing the idle servant (Luke 19). The barren fig-tree was cursed for not bringing forth fruit (Mark 11). We cannot be saved without practising faith, hope and charity; but this can be done only by good works!

Which good works are necessary? Keeping the commandments of God and of His Church, and faithfully performing the duties of our state of life.

Conditions requisite for rendering our good works deserving of heavenly reward. In the first place, we must perform them in the state of grace. The soul in the state of sin is a spiritual corpse and, therefore, unable to act spiritually, that is, unable to please God and gain merit, however numerous and heroic may be her good works. Secondly, a good intention is required to make our good works deserving of reward in heaven, for, if we do not work *for* God, we cannot expect Him to reward us for our work. Hence let us make a good intention every morning and offer all our thoughts, words and works of the day to God, and renew this good intention now and then during the day. We can do so by saying: "O my God, I offer Thee all my thoughts, words and works of this day, to please Thee," or "for the love of Thee," or "as a penance for my sins," or "in honor of Thy Passion, of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," etc. The good intention gives a value to all our works; even our eating, recreation, sleep, and other actions that would have no merit in themselves, become pleasing to God and deserving of heavenly reward. Thirdly, we must perform our actions according to the will of God, for whatever is opposed to His will, is not a good work. Therefore, "strive to secure your election (salvation) by good works" (2 Pet. 1. 10).

RELIGIOUS COLDNESS AND INDIFFERENCE

Our divine Saviour Jesus Christ most ardently desires to make us forever happy. This was the object of His Incarnation, of His three years' ministry, during which He preached and did good wherever He went. How gladly did the persons who were well-disposed welcome Him and listen to Him! But how great the malice of those who despised Him and His preaching! It was a bad sign for them, for Jesus said to them: "Ye are not of God, because you hear not the word of God" (John 8. 47). How many Christians in our own day are cold and indifferent towards our holy religion!

I. Indifference to the Truths of Religion.

1. Theoretically. It makes no difference to them what the Church teaches or what they believe. This indifference in some proceeds from sloth. They do not want the trouble of receiving instruction, of hearing the word of God, of reading good, instructive and edifying books. In others this indifference proceeds from pride, from self-sufficiency, from their fondness of doubting all they do not understand. They presume they know enough, they are able to judge for themselves. Their guide is the secular press, which pretends to know, understand and judge everything. Hence these persons do not hear the word of God, and belong to the class of those to whom this rebuke of our Saviour is applicable: "Ye are not of God, because you hear not the word of God." Such persons are guilty of the foulest ingratitude towards God's holy word.

2. Practically. Many dare not speak out their indiffer-

ence, although they are indifferent in their heart. They have no relish for what pertains to religion, for they find such matters very dry, tedious and unpalatable. They are more at home in politics, in money-making schemes, in amusements, in fashions, in light and sentimental reading. They have no zeal for the support and propagation of their holy religion, but only for good investments, for pleasure. They do not practise their religion for want of time, for they must rest or taste a little pleasure after the week's work. They take no stock in our Saviour's words: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11. 28). Their practical indifference gradually leads them to the loss of their faith, for experience proves that he who practises his faith will never lose it.

II. Indifference towards God.

1. Indifference towards the Creator. How incomprehensible the indifference, the coldness of so many Christians towards their Creator, their Lord, their Father, their Benefactor, the Giver of every good gift, who has prepared for them the ineffable and endless happiness of heaven! So few men ever think of God to whom they owe all that they have and all that they are, and who alone can make them happy here and hereafter! Even most of those who are reckoned among the good, the faithful, seldom ever think of God and His benefits and of their obligation of gratitude. The majority even of Christians are forgetful of Him and His benefits, and care but little if they please or displease him. They treat Him, His holy Name, His commandments, His service with indifference, almost with contempt and insult! How deplorable a conduct! God's happiness does not suffer by this, but man's happiness suffers, is forfeited thereby! It is a bad sign for a man to turn his back on God; such a conduct deserves great punishment here and hereafter. Let us ask ourselves: "Do I love God? Do I take pleasure in think-

ing on Him, in honoring Him as my Father? Do I try to please Him in all things? Do I carefully shun whatever may displease and offend him? Whence my coldness and indifference towards him? Whither does it lead me?

2. Indifference Especially towards Our Divine Saviour. He is the Son of God, the Light of the world, our Redeemer, our Brother, our Lord, our Judge, the Giver of eternal life, the Food of our soul, the Model of every virtue, the Joy of the elect. His name, His word, His flesh and blood, His promises are the constant objects of the praise, blessing, thanksgiving and enjoyment of the elect. But the indifferent Catholic imagines he has more important things to think of, to perform! He hears the name of Jesus, but does not think of Him. He has no relish for Mass, for the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist. He beholds the pulpit in the church, but sneaks away from the sermon; he cares not to hear it, for he already knows it all! He knows that Jesus Christ has prepared a place for him in heaven, but cares not about it, for he prefers a box or a seat in the theater, a place in the Exchange, in the ball-room, in the saloon, in the gambling den. Heaven is not for him, nor for those who are like him. In vain will he, after death, knock at its door, for he will then hear these words from the Saviour's lips: "I know you not" (Mat. 25. 12).

Let us seriously examine our conscience as to how we have been serving God! As to what kind of faith is ours! As to what efforts we are making to manifest our love and gratitude to God and to gain heaven!

RELAPSE INTO SIN

"Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest something worse befall thee" (John 5. 14).

Our divine Saviour cured a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years. His disease was a punishment of his sins. Hence after curing him, Jesus Christ warned him not to relapse into his sins, lest a far more severe punishment should be inflicted on him, that is, death in sin followed by his condemnation to the everlasting fire of hell. This man is a figure of ourselves. We go to confession, bewailing our sins and receiving pardon after promising to amend. But we afterwards fail to keep our promises; sometimes already on the following day we fall back into the same sins, and continue to do so day after day until we again go to confession. In this manner we acquire the habit of sin, and this habit at last takes such deep root in us, that it becomes a second nature to us and almost impossible to be extirpated.

I. Causes of Relapse.

1. Frequenting the occasions of sin. However strong our resolutions to sin no more may be, they are vain, if we do not shun the occasions of sin. St. Peter had a firm resolution to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, were it even to cost him his life, for he was perfectly sincere when he said to Jesus: "Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee" (Mat. 26. 35). But he did not keep out of bad company, which was an occasion of sin, but went into it and remained some time in it, till he at length fell three times, for three times did he say before all present: "I know not the Man." We who are far from being so holy, so attached to Jesus Christ, so fully determined to avoid

sin as St. Peter was, cannot expect to meet with a different outcome, if, like him, we do not keep away from the occasions of sin. In fact, what does our own experience tell us? It tells us that every time we go with So and So, we get angry, curse, engage in obscene conversation, break the sixth commandment, fall into sins of detraction, of intemperance, of injustice, etc. The oftener we go with such persons, into such places, the oftener also we fall into sin, thus verifying the words of Holy Scripture: "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it" (Eccli. 3. 27).

2. Human respect. After our confession and Holy Communion, we say with St. Paul: "Who shall separate me from the charity (love) of Christ?" (Rom. 8. 35). But when there is question of abstaining from meat on the days prescribed, of going to Mass regularly and also to confession and holy Communion, of discontinuing our visits to saloons, to certain places or persons, as we are in duty bound, we lose courage at the thought, "What will So and So think, what will people say?" And then do we not act, as St. Peter expresses it, "like a dog returning to his vomit, like a washed sow plunging herself again into the mire?" (2 Pet. 2. 22).

3. Neglect of prayer. Were we regularly to say our morning and our night prayers, to invoke sincerely the holy names of Jesus and Mary, whenever we are beset by temptations, we would be able to drive away all evil thoughts, to conquer our inordinate passions, and avoid relapsing into sin, for our prayers would obtain for us God's all-powerful grace and it would always enable us to keep out of sin. But God's all-powerful grace is not given to us, because we do not ask for it and seem, therefore, not to want it.

4. Neglect of frequent confession and holy Communion. Medicine is necessary not only to cure disease, but often also to prevent it. In like manner, we do not go as often to confession as we should, not only to have our sins for-

given, but also to keep us from falling into sin, for we should go to confession as often as is necessary to prevent our committing a grievous sin. And if we have committed a grievous sin, we should go at once to confession, to keep from committing other grievous sins and thus acquiring the habit of such sins. But as we seldom go to confession, we easily form a habit of sin from one confession to another, and such a habit will surely stick to us, if we do not seriously and persistently combat it by going frequently to confession and holy Communion. Just as want of sufficient food weakens us and renders us unfit to work, so also our soul needs a sufficiency of spiritual food to keep up her strength and avoid sin and practise virtue. The principal food of the soul is holy Communion, and he who does not receive it often enough, will always be weak in the spiritual life and be easily overcome by temptation, by his passions. It was frequent Communion that enabled the young, the timid, the physically weak to undergo joyfully the most frightful torments and die as martyrs; the penitent sinners to give up their evil habits and the occasions of sin and lead a holy life and gain heaven. The same success will attend our own efforts to amend if, like them, we frequently receive the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist. But the less frequently we receive them, the less will be our hopes of amendment and salvation.

5. Forgetfulness of the eternal truths. The serious consideration of death, judgment, hell and heaven fills us with a wholesome fear of God, fear of offending and displeasing Him by committing sin. "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Eccli. 7. 40). He who does not seriously consider or call to mind these eternal truths, cannot avoid falling into spiritual ruin and desolation, into sin, for, says the prophet, "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is no one that considereth in his heart" (Jer. 12. 11).

II. Heinousness of Relapse.

1. It is a detestable sin, for it is a kind of perjury. How often have we not promised to God in confession to sin no more, to avoid the occasions of sin! There are mitigating circumstances for a first sin. The sinner is usually not aware of its gravity, or of the danger that led him to commit it. But after having confessed it, he cannot allege insufficient knowledge of its sinfulness or of the dangers or occasions leading to it. And if he commits it again, he commits it with greater knowledge, and in spite of his earnest promises, promises witnessed by the angels and by the devils. The relapsing sinner breaks the promise he deliberately made to God, in order to be forgiven.

2. It is an act of foul ingratitude. What God has done for the relapsing sinner! God pardoned and protected him, preferred him to so many other sinners, whom death carried off before they had time to repent, or the opportunity of going to confession; He restored peace to his mind, and conferred so many other graces without any merit or claim on his part! How ungrateful is the relapsing sinner; he seems to take advantage of God's mercy to offend Him again and again!

III. Terrible Consequences of Relapse.

The relapsing sinner's ingratitude is like a parched wind, for it dries up the channel of graces. Hence the relapsing sinner is in constant danger of not being again forgiven, for, says St. Paul, "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6. 7). Although He is infinitely merciful, He is also infinitely just, and His justice demands that He should not allow sinners to continue to abuse His mercy indefinitely. The next sin of the relapsing sinner may be his last, for his death may immediately follow it as its just punishment, or because that sin may fill up the measure of his sins, that is, complete the number of the sins God had resolved to pardon him; for

as our most just God, according to Holy Scripture, "having ordered all things in measure, number and weight" (Wisd. 11. 21), has determined the number of graces He would give each individual for his salvation, and has also fixed the number of sins He would forgive each individual, and would not forgive him beyond that number, that is, would not further allow him to abuse His goodness and mercy. (Doctrine of St. Alphonsus.) Hence the relapsing sinner is in constant danger of filling up the measure of his sins and of drying up entirely the source of the graces of God in his regard!

Frequent relapse especially brings on the habit of sin; the habit of sin makes the sin like a second nature, and, consequently, brings on spiritual blindness, for God withdraws His graces gradually from those who abuse them; the sinner lacks, therefore, the light of grace; and his spiritual blindness leads him to obduracy of heart. A cloud comes over his mind, prevents him from realizing his danger, and the *reprobate sense* imperceptibly takes possession of him and renders him insensible to all the motives he has for his conversion, for saving his soul, and finally he falls into the terrible state of the sinner described in Holy Scripture: "The wicked man, when he has reached the depth of his sins, contemneth" (Prov. 18. 3). We have terrible examples of this in Judas and the Jewish nation, reprobated by God!

(Conclude by applying the remedies to relapse, recapitulating its causes given in I.)

II. SERIES OF THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR

THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR

"You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor" (Mat. 5. 43).

Our divine Saviour in His wonderful Sermon on the Mount promulgated His Code of Laws for all who were to belong to the kingdom of God on earth, that is, to His Church, so that by its observance they should be enabled to belong to the kingdom of God in heaven. In this Code He shows how we should reject the false principles of the world, which is the enemy of God and the slave of Satan, its master. In this Code Jesus briefly enumerates some of the precepts of the Old Law and some maxims of the world, and then prescribes that His disciples should reject the false principles in vogue among worldlings and the Jews of His time, and should live and conduct themselves in a manner more perfect than was required by the Mosaic Law.

Among other things He said: "You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor." Who has told us that? Nature has told us from our very cradle to love those we see around us. Reason has taught us that we need our fellow-men. The law of the world has told us the same, for man is a member of society, and without mutual love there is no union, no society possible. The law of Moses also promulgated the obligation of loving one's neighbor, but only in an imperfect manner. But the law of Jesus Christ, being a law of perfection, prescribes a perfect love of our neighbor, as we shall see. Until the coming of our Saviour on earth men were told: "Love thy neighbor," but it was also said to them: "Hate thy enemy." But Jesus thus promulgated His perfect law: "But I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to them

that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love (only) them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathen this? Be you therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mat. 5. 44–48). "This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15. 12). "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another as I have loved you. . . . By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13. 35, 36). These last words of our Saviour constitute His dying command and bequest to His disciples, to the members of His Church. As he gave His life for them, He willed that they also should be ready to die, if need be, for their neighbor.

His beloved disciple, St. John the Evangelist, so full of the spirit of Jesus Christ, when, in his extreme old age, he was no longer able to preach even a short sermon, would on every occasion repeat again and again to his hearers: "My little children, love one another." Being asked why he would always repeat the same injunction, he replied: "Because it is the Lord's command, and if you keep it, it will be sufficient." This same divine command we should repeat to you without ceasing, for if you observe it faithfully, you will be our Saviour's true disciples and secure your salvation.

The virtue of the love of our neighbor is indispensably necessary for our salvation. As Christians, we have as many motives to love our neighbor as to love God Himself. The Christian love of our neighbor proceeds from the same source as the love of God. We love the same object in both loves. The same charity which induces us to love God, necessarily induces us to love our neighbor as His

image, as the object of His affection. And the same charity which causes us to love our neighbor, impels us to love him for God's sake.

These two loves are two inseparable commandments according to our Saviour's very words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is *like to this:* Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mat. 22. 37–39). They may be considered as but one commandment requiring us to love our neighbor in God and God in our neighbor. "These two loves," says St. Gregory, "are as the two halves of a whole, as two streams from one source, as two acts of the same virtue." The love with which Christ requires us to love our neighbor, therefore, is truly the "fulfilling of the law" as St. Paul declares (Rom. 13. 10); in other words, it is the sum of all our duties and "suffices for our salvation," in the words of St. John the Evangelist. This shows how greatly false devotees err, who imagine that they are full of divine love, because they say many prayers, frequent the sacraments, perform diverse mortifications and other good works, although in their heart they foster secret jealousies, aversions, resentments, suspicions, rash judgments, and are addicted to fault-finding, criticism, detraction and slander. He who excepts but one person from the love he owes his neighbor, does not really love God. "If any man say, I love God and hateth his neighbor, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?" (1 John 4. 20). On the other hand, how encouraging is it to those good, but timorous souls, who fear that they do not love God, because they do not *feel* love for Him, and feel so cold and dry at prayer. He who really loves his neighbor, his fellow-men, as he loves himself, as Jesus Christ commands, who rejoices with his fellow-men, sympathizes with them, avoids offending them, strives to relieve

and oblige them, is forgiving towards them, bears with their failings, is zealous for their salvation, proves clearly that the love of God also reigns in his heart. Therefore, the love of our neighbor is just as necessary for our salvation as the love of God.

I. Motives of Faith for Loving Our Neighbor.

God commands us to love our neighbor. He has engraved this law in the human heart. No one has ever denied this law. Jews, Gentiles, unbelievers agree in this with the Christians. Hence this law is in accordance with human nature. If I were to address only your reason, I would say to you: "Love your kindred, your friends, your fellow-citizens; love all who love you." But I speak not of natural love, but of Christian love, or charity. Hence I will give you motives of faith.

Before commencing His passion, Jesus addressed a long and beautiful discourse to His disciples, in which He said: "A new commandment I give you that you love one another as I have loved you"; that is, with a patient, constant and self-sacrificing love — He gave them this commandment as His last will: "This is My commandment that you love one another. By this men shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." These words show how greatly Jesus took this commandment to heart, since He repeated it, made it His last will and willed that its observance should be an unquestionable proof of being His true disciples, and their principal duty, Hence St. Paul says: "He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13. 8). He wished that His disciples should always consider this commandment as *new,* for men usually relax in the course of time in the observance of ancient laws; but new ones are better kept.

This commandment is new in its cause, the New Testament, the law of love. It is new in its effects, because, as St. Augustine remarks, it has renewed mankind and made

a new people of the nations of the earth. It is new as to the manner of its observance; anciently it was commanded: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Now Jesus commands us: "Love one another as I have loved you, that they [His disciples] may be one as We are one, that the love with which Thou hast loved Me, be in them" (John 17). The observance of this commandment in the manner set forth by our Saviour, has made all the members of His Church one body, members of the body of which Jesus Christ Himself is the Head. It is new in its motive, for, says our Saviour, "whatsoever you do to the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me" (Mat. 25. 40).

This commandment ranks next to that of the love of God, for Jesus says: "It is like unto this. . . . On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets" (Mat. 22. 39, 40). "The fullness of the law is love" (Rom. 13. 10). It is the most extended, for it can be most universally observed. The mark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ is not prayer, fasting and other austerities, but the love of the neighbor, for "by this all men shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13. 35). The observance of this commandment is a sure sign that the spirit of God reigns in a family, in a community, in a city, for "every kingdom divided against itself shall fall" (be destroyed) (Mat. 12. 25). It is the essence of the Christian religion: "He that hateth his brother is in darkness" (1 John 2. 11), "He dwelleth in death; he is a murderer" (1 John 3. 15). "In vain do we perform other good works," says St. Augustine; "if we do not love our neighbor, they are great steps, but out of the way" of salvation. Were it not for the love of the neighbor, men would be towards one another like wild beasts. "O excessive clemency of God," exclaims St. Jerome. "O unspeakable benignity of God, whose very command is a benefit! We are obliged to practise charity towards all men, and, at the same time, all

men are obliged to practise charity towards us. How happy would all men be, if they would all faithfully keep this commandment! The whole world would be like a great and magnificent edifice in which all things fit well together."

How well the early Christians observed this commandment and showed themselves true disciples of Jesus Christ! "The multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul" (Acts 4. 32). Their love for one another excited the admiration of their very persecutors, who would recognize them as Christians by their mutual love. "These persons," they would say, "are Christians, for see how they love one another and are ready to die for one another!" Truly the observance of the commandment of the love of the neighbor proved a great blessing to them both in this life and in the next.

II. Intrinsic Motives for Loving Our Neighbor, Deduced From Faith.

There are many intrinsic motives for loving our neighbor, even if he lacked all natural lovable qualities. If God had commanded us to love our neighbor without endowing him with anything to render him lovable to us, His commandment would be impossible to us with regard to many persons who are excentric, disagreeable, repulsive, disobliging, haughty, etc. But what does faith show us in them under these unlovable qualities?

1. In the first place, faith tells us that every man is the living image of God Himself, for every man has been created after the likeness of God Himself; man is the most perfect work of God in the visible creation. How great was the reverence of Moses before the burning bush, and that of the Israelites before the smoking Mount Sinai, and why? Because the Lord was on the mountain, the Lord was in the burning bush. We should show the same re-

spect to our neighbor, although he is full of defects. Perhaps by his pride he is like the inaccessible Sinai, and by his harshness he is like the rough rocks of that mountain, by his peevishness and sensitiveness he is like thorns in the bush, and by his irascibility and passion he is a source of fire and smoke. But notwithstanding all this, let us bear in mind that he is a living image of the God of infinite perfection, who deserves all our love. We should, therefore, respect and love in him the image of the Creator.

2. Secondly, our neighbor is the price of the blood of Jesus Christ. How greatly does not our divine Saviour love our neighbor! "God commendeth His charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, . . . Christ died for us" (Rom. 5. 8, 9). Why should we love our neighbor? Because Christ died for him as well as for us. How great the humiliations, the labors, the hardships, the torments, the bitter and painful death the Son of God endured for every one of us! The Son of God is truly the best judge of the value or the worth of every man. And how excessively, we may say, He loved each man, since He died for all men without exception! Had it been necessary, He would have suffered and died as many times as there are men on earth! What excuses can we allege for not loving our neighbor, that is, all men, without exception? How eloquent we are when enumerating the faults, the defects of the men we do not like! (Give examples of some of the epithets we apply to them.) And nothwithstanding all their unamiable qualities and defects, Jesus Christ loves them, and has died for them! Is he foolish or blind for having "bought each of them at a great price?" (1 Cor. 6. 20). Every one of them is a precious stone, perhaps soiled, rough, but still exceedingly precious. Jesus Christ gave all He had and bought that soiled, rough stone, for He considered it well worth what He paid for it (Mat. 13. 46)! Does not this very fact more

than counterbalance and outweigh all your excuses and objections? Every man, we may say, has been washed and cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

3. Thirdly, all men are members of one and the same body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. "We are one body in Christ" (Rom: 12. 5). How do the members of a body act towards one another? "If one member suffers, all the members sympathize with it" (1 Cor. 12. 26). "The members are solicitous for one another" (v. 25). Just as the members of our body help and care for one another, so also should we help and care for our neighbor as much as we can.

4. Fourthly, all men have the same end; all are called to the same everlasting happiness, for all men are children of the same Father, God, all have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, so that all may become members of one and the same body, participants in the same sacraments, be fed with the same doctrine and governed by the same Gospel, and be forever companions in heaven! All our duties to our neighbor, to our fellow-men, are reducible to love. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Rom. 13. 8). Love all men as St. Paul loved all without exception, for he said: "I am a debtor to the Greeks and the barbarians, to the wise and the unwise" (Rom. 1. 14). He whom we dislike, ill-treat and condemn, may become a saint in heaven, and we may be among the reprobates for our want of charity! St. Jerome testifies that the pagans were wont, in their astonishment, to say of the early Christians: "Behold how they love one another, and how ready they are to die for one another!" But how different now is the conduct of many Christians! We could now say of them: "Behold how they despise, hate, insult, curse, ill-treat and even murder one another!" Formerly, as Tertullian said, "a Christian is no one's enemy!" But now we might say: "A Christian loves none but himself, his own interest, his own pleasure!"

5. Finally, a most powerful motive for us to love all men, to wish them well, to do good to them, to bear with their failings and disagreeable qualities, is that our divine Saviour considers as done to Himself whatever we do to our neighbor. "Whatever you have done to the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me" (Mat. 25. 40, 45). If we love our neighbor and do good to him for our Saviour's sake, we have the same merit as if we did it to Jesus Christ Himself. Hence those who truly, that is, in a Christian manner, love their neighbor, will, on the day of judgment, be rewarded with the endless glory and happiness of heaven, whilst those who do not truly love their neighbor, shall then be consigned to "the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"! There is no other alternative: Either love your neighbor and do good to him, and heaven with its endless joys shall be your reward; but if you do not love your neighbor and do or wish evil to him, you shall be cast forever into the unquenchable fire of hell! You are free to choose either alternative!

III. Qualities of the Love of the Neighbor.

The love some persons have for their neighbor is like that of the pagans, for they love only their relatives, their friends and those who love them or promote their interests or pleasures. Their love is a mere natural love. But the love required of Christians for their neighbor is supernatural love; they are to love their neighbor for God's sake, from some motive that has reference to God.

The love of others is an interested love, for they seek therein only their own temporal interests. But true "charity seeketh not its own" (1 Cor. 13. 5), but the neighbor's interests.

The love of many is a divided love, for they love only certain persons, and have no love for others. They love their friends, and hate their enemies. But Christian "charity," says St. Paul, "is benignant" (Ibid. 4) towards all men.

The love of some is inconstant. To-day they are friends, but will be enemies to-morrow. "There is nothing meaner," says the pagan Cicero, "than to quarrel with one with whom you have been on intimate terms." True Christian "charity," says St. Paul, "never faileth" (Ibid. 8).

The love of many is profane, carnal and passionate, therefore dangerous and sinful, and tends to the damnation of both the lover and the beloved. But true Christian "charity," according to St. Paul, "edifieth" (Ibid. 8), and promotes salvation.

The love of very many is useless, profitless, political, and consists chiefly, if not entirely, in exterior politeness, in mere words, is insincere, and often hypocritical. True charity is candid and sincere and comes from the heart, because it is supernatural in its motive.

True "charity is patient, is kind, beareth all things" (1 Cor. 13. 4), bears with the neighbor's failings and shortcomings. Where patience is wanting, quarrels, enmities, etc., ensue, and in families frequently result in divorce.

True "charity thinketh no evil" (Ibid. 5), but avoids suspicion and rash judgment about the conduct of the neighbor, for God alone, who reads men's hearts, has the right to judge.

True "charity is not provoked to anger" (Ibid). It considers all men as brethren, and says with Moses: "Men, you are brethren, why do you harm one another?" (Acts 7. 26).

True "charity is not ambitious" (Ibid.) nor proud, but humble, and does not seek to lord it over the neighbor, or to despise the neighbor.

True "charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth" (Ibid. 6). It does not lead the neighbor to sin, nor deceive him by insidious flattery. In a word, true charity has at heart the neighbor's welfare, especially the salvation of his soul.

If we wish to show Christian charity towards our neigh-

bor, let us put into practice this admonition of the prince of the apostles: "Laying aside all malice and all deceit, and feigning and envy, and all detraction, like new-born children" (1 Pet. 2. 1, 2), that is, let us love our neighbor in all simplicity and sincerity. We should respect our neighbor for the very reasons wherefore we are bound to love him (See II, Intrinsic Motives). "With honor forestalling one another" (Rom. 12. 10).

Let us never lose sight of the truth that Jesus Christ considers as done to Himself whatever we do to our neighbor, and that our salvation depends on our conduct towards our neighbor.

HOW TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mat. 19. 19).

Our love for our neighbor should be a supernatural love (see preceding Sermon), sincere and practical, otherwise it will be only a human, interested, exterior and deceitful love, and not a Christian love. Christian charity never belies itself, conforms its actions to its words and shows itself by good works towards all men, everywhere and at all times.

1. In the first place, it requires us to bear patiently with our neighbor. "With patience, supporting one another in charity" (Eph. 4. 2). "Now we that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves" (Rom. 15. 1). "Charity is patient, . . . not irritable, endureth all, beareth all" (1 Cor. 13. 4, 7). "Take away patience from charity," says St. Cyprian, "and you destroy charity."

Let us never lose sight of the fact that we also have our defects, our shortcomings, perhaps far greater, more numerous and more unbearable than those about whom we complain. Are we not, perhaps, of a melancholy disposition, peevish, capricious, irritable, impulsive, over-sensitive, quarrelsome, vindictive, selfish? How much have not those we live with to bear from us? Is not the want of forbearance of husband and wife towards each other the most frequent cause of unhappiness in a family, of the evil of divorce? Here is the remedy: "Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if any one have a complaint against another. Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also" (Coloss. 3, 13).

In fact, what is required of you? Wife, bear with your husband; husband, bear with your wife. Mutual forbear-

ance between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, between Christians and Christians! "Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. 3. 14). Try to excuse, if not the act, at least the intention. But you find this difficult! But do not others also find it difficult to act in this manner towards you? But, you say: "So and So have spoken ill of me, etc., and I have done him no harm, given him no cause to treat me so!" The best remedy for you is "bearing with one another." You have offended God far more and even daily. "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (James 2. 13). Remember that "charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4. 8).

2. Secondly, charity requires us TO EDIFY our neighbor by our good conduct. "Science puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (1 Cor. 8. 1). Let every one of you please his neighbor unto good for edification (Rom. 15. 2). The good example of a virtuous person is often, as experience proves, more persuasive and profitable than even the most eloquent sermons. A good, practical Catholic by his edifying conduct continually reminds his neighbor of the necessity of serving God faithfully, and practically proves that this is possible for those who are earnestly resolved to do so. "There is no scandal in him who loveth his brother" (1 John 2. 10). But he who disedifies his neighbor, who leads him astray by his bad example, by his evil life, does not really love his neighbor, but actually hates him, for he scandalizes him and leads, or tries to lead, him into sin. "He who hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3. 15). Bad example is worse than stealing, than slander, than the murder of his body, for bad example, scandal, is the murder of the neighbor's soul, spiritual murder. Some wicked persons actually lay snares to lead the innocent astray, under the pretext of friendship, of charity! This is indeed devilish, since it is performing the work of the devil, acting as his agent to lead souls to perdition! What

does St. Paul say about giving scandal? "If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh" (1 Cor. 8. 13). Woe to the giver of scandal! "I will require his blood," that is, the soul of the person led astray by the scandal-giver, "at thy hands" (Ezech. 3. 18). Do not say as Cain did: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4. 9). "Therefore," says St. Paul, "let us follow after the things that are of peace, and keep the things that are of edification towards one another" (Rom. 14. 19).

3. Charity, in the third place, requires us TO CORRECT our neighbor with meekness. "Brethren," says St. Paul, "if a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. 6. 1). Correct your neighbor gently and prudently, for perhaps "God will grant them penance to know the truth and to recover themselves from the snares of the devil" (2 Tim. 2. 25). If charity requires us to assist our neighbor in his temporal or bodily dangers, how much more does it not oblige us to do so in those that concern the salvation of his soul? We should consider this a strict duty for us, whenever prudence suggests it, and there is hope that our correction, kindly made, will have a good effect, for "God gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor" (Eccli. 17. 12). That God may bless our correction, we ought previously recommend it to Him in prayer.

This duty is seldom performed, and still more seldom properly performed, for want of prudence, gentleness and the pure motive of a truly Christian charity. Let us bear in mind, as a reminder of our duty of correction, these words of St. Bernard: "A beast of burden falls down, and everybody hastens to raise it up; but a soul falls, and there is no one to lend a helping hand to raise it up!" But far from correcting, some even do all they can to make their neighbor sink more deeply into the mire of sin; they are foremost to excite, encourage and flatter others to do evil!

Such friends are worse than deadly enemies, more dangerous even than the very devils! "It is better to be corrected by a wise man, than to be deceived by the flattery of fools" (Eccles. 7. 6), that is, by the flattery of the wicked, for in Scripture "fools" is often used to denote "the wicked."

Parents and superiors have a great responsibility in this matter. They are obliged to use their authority to correct those God has entrusted to them. Woe to them if any of their charges are lost on account of their neglect of this sacred duty!

We should, however, correct in a spirit of charity. "It behooves us," says St. John Chrysostom, "not to scold harshly or to crush him who has committed a fault, but to admonish him with kindness; nor to persecute him with anger and abuse, but to assist him with good counsel; nor to address him with pharisaical pride and arrogance, but to admonish him with love and meekness." Let us never lose sight of this saying of the meek St. Francis de Sales: "A teaspoonful of honey will catch more flies than a hogshead of vinegar." Exhort kindly, entreat lovingly. "An aged man rebuke not, but entreat him as you would your father; admonish a young man, as you would your brother; an elderly woman, as you would your mother; a young woman, as you would your sister in all charity." "You have admonished him once and he paid no heed," says St. John Chrysostom; "do so twice, and thrice, and even oftener until you have persuaded him to amend. God speaks to us daily, and does not desist. Imitate His care, and you will thereby gain over your neighbor."

4. Finally, charity requires us TO ASSIST our neighbor in need generously, for, says St. Paul, "we are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12. 5). "God hath tempered the body together, . . . that the members might be mutually careful for one another. And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12, 24–26). Let us bear in mind that charity is benevolent and sympa-

thizes with those who suffer, who are in want, and leaves nothing undone that is in its power to relieve distress and need. Moreover, he who helps the needy, who shrinks not from making sacrifices to assist his neighbor, assists Jesus Christ Himself. St. Martin, when yet a catechumen and a soldier in the Roman army, one day at the gate of Amiens saw a poor half-naked beggar shivering with cold and imploring in vain an alms from the soldiers entering the city. Martin, moved with compassion, but having nothing else to give him, took off his military cloak and cut it in two and gave one half to the shivering beggar, and covered himself as well as he could with the other half. This caused much merriment to the other soldiers. On the following night, however, Jesus Christ, surrounded by angels and clothed in the half cloak Martin had given the beggar, appeared to him and, pointing to the half cloak He wore, said to the angels: "Martin, the catechumen, has clothed Me with this garment."

Some object that they cannot afford to give alms to the poor, and yet how much do not such persons spend in vain and costly dresses, in amusements, in drinking and smoking, in useless trips, sweetmeats, perfumery, for pet animals, and even in criminal pleasures! And some even go so far as to insult the poverty and distress of their neighbor. They have no heart, no sympathy for destitute families, for the poor sick, the orphans, the young in danger of leading a life of infamy on account of their poverty! They have pity for animals, but none for their fellowmen!

Behold Him, who is the Model of Christians! What has He not done for you, wretched sinner? "Thus hath God loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John 3. 16). And what has the Only-begotten of the Father done for you? "He hath loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. 2. 20). "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (James 2. 13). Con-

sider the rich man in hell crying out: "I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16. 24). And what has brought him to this misery? His hard-heartedness towards the poor as well as his sensual life! Consider also the sentence the just Judge will pronounce on the wicked at the last day for having neglected to perform the works of charity towards their poor and destitute neighbor: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire" (Mat. 25. 41).

Do you wish to escape so terrible a sentence? Heed the admonition of the angel Raphael to Tobias and his son: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms more than to lay up treasures of gold. For alms delivereth from [eternal] death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and causeth to find mercy and life everlasting" (Tob. 12. 8, 9). "Son, defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor. Despise not the hungry soul, and provoke not the poor in his want. Afflict not the heart of the needy, and defer not to give to him who is in distress. Reject not the petition of the afflicted, and turn not away thy face from the needy. . . . Leave not them that ask of thee to curse thee behind thy back, for the prayer of him that curseth thee in the bitterness of his soul, shall be heard; for He that made him, will hear him" (Eccli. 4). Remember that "he that giveth to the poor, shall not want; he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence" (Prov. 28. 27). Therefore, "give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6. 38).

"Therefore, put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another; even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also. But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. 3. 12–14).

CHRISTIAN LOVE OF ONESELF.

1. It consists, before all, in endeavoring to save our soul, by 1, avoiding sin and its occasions; 2, after sin by bringing forth worthy fruits of penance; 3, by performing the prescribed good works and practising the Christian virtues.

2. We should love our body in a Christian manner, 1, as the soul's dwelling and its instrument in the service of God; 2, as sanctified by baptism and destined for heavenly glory.

We may love temporal goods as creatures of God, as His gifts; also as means of promoting His glory, of assisting the needy and of fulfilling the duties of our state of life.

3. Sins against the Christian love of oneself: 1, preferring our honor and will to God's honor and will; 2, doing more for our body and for temporal goods than for our soul and eternal life; 3, seeking our temporal interest to the injury, or at the expense, of our neighbor.

THE PARDON OF ENEMIES

"Love your enemies," says our divine Saviour in His Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5. 44).

I. The Pardon of Enemies is a Most Sacred Duty.

However difficult this obligation, we cannot escape it; our salvation depends on its performance.

1. In the first place, God demands it as our Lord and Master. God is our Creator; we therefore belong to Him; He is our Lord, our Sovereign, our Lawgiver; He is our Father. We owe Him the strictest obedience. His divine Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, says expressly: "You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5. 44, 45). The world tells us to hate our enemies, to be revenged on them. But the selfish maxims of the world are opposed to the loving and benevolent commands of God. We must not follow the world, for it has no authority over us, no claims to our obedience; it cannot procure us happiness, it is governed by the evil spirit and opposed to God. Submission to the dictates of the world leads to everlasting misery. All nature obeys God, its true Sovereign. "The storms," says St. Jerome, "do the Lord's bidding, but the vindictive transgress it."

The world says that it is impossible for a man to forgive his enemies. This assertion is blasphemous, for God, being infinitely just, never commands impossible things. Being infinitely good, He is ever ready to help us to fulfil all His commands, especially those that are difficult to perform.

With His help, which is easily obtained by earnestly praying for it, what is even very difficult becomes comparatively easy to fulfil. Some object to forgiving their enemies (offenders), saying: "If I forgive, I expose myself to be again insulted, ill-treated." But remember that taking revenge will serve only to perpetuate the enmity, the quarrel, and tends to bring about a bitter feud that may last for generations and cause many crimes. "But he who has offended me, does not deserve to be forgiven; he is too mean." But God, who commands you to forgive him, deserves to be obeyed! Consider Him, for whose sake you are required to forgive. He is your God, your greatest Benefactor, your most loving Father! "But if I forgive, everybody will look upon me as a coward!" But it is a far greater cowardice to allow yourself to be swayed by human respect into disobeying the law of God. He who defies human respect, gives evident proof of moral courage! Moreover, it requires great courage and a strong will to overcome one's most violent passions!—"To forgive one's enemy is very hard for poor human nature." True; and, nevertheless, fervent and earnest prayer will even make it easy. Moreover, you are not the only one who is obliged to keep God's commandment in this matter; your enemy has the same obligation, and all mankind besides. Furthermore, reflect seriously on God's threats against those who refuse to forgive their enemies. Is not the law of the world requiring you to take revenge surrounded with greater difficulties? How difficult it is to take revenge! How great the troubles, anxieties and cares necessary to choose and use the means of taking revenge! And how often does failure ensue! And if success is attained, does it not bring you greater trouble, greater unhappiness in this world and expose you to eternal damnation in the next! Hence revenge is apt to be more hurtful to you than to your enemy!

The commandment of the pardon of enemies, however

difficult to our poor, weak nature, is necessary for the protection and stability of society, for anarchy would soon be universal, if every one were allowed to take so-called justice into his own hands! Wherefore, for the temporal welfare of human society and of individuals, for the eternal welfare of individuals, God justly says: "Revenge is Mine; I will repay" (Rom. 12. 19). Whom should you obey, God or the world?

2. Our divine Saviour Jesus Christ, as our Model, demands that we forgive our enemies. "Be ye merciful," He says, "as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6. 36). Great, and beyond all comprehension is God's mercy and longanimity towards sinners, towards each one of us! (Relate the parable Mat. 18. 23–35.)

Now behold your Model, Jesus Christ hanging on the cross! What excruciating pains does He not endure, what bitter insults do not His enemies and the bystanders heap upon Him! He suffers all this, He suffers it innocently. He opens His lips in prayer to His heavenly Father. Does He beseech Him to punish those wicked men as they deserve? No; listen to His prayer: "Father, forgive them!" And this does not yet satisfy His love for His enemies, for He even excuses their wickedness and malice, saying: "For they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23. 34).

The examples of the saints forgiving their enemies, doing them good, praying for them; for instance, the patriarch Joseph, son of Jacob; David, St. Stephen, St. James, the holy martyrs; St. John Gualbert. The early Christians "had but one heart and one soul" (Acts 4, 32). Tertullian mentions that the pagans were wont to praise the Christians of those days for their love of those who injured and persecuted them. But how many Catholics in these times are more mindful of injuries than of the benefits bestowed upon them, and are always ready to take revenge for the least word or trifle they suppose to be offensive to them!

When reminded of their duty as Christians, they allege, as a justification of their spirit of revenge, that they are not saints, and that only saints are able to forgive injuries! No! for it was only by forgiving their enemies that they became saints, for instance, St. John Gualbert. He was a fiery-tempered soldier, noted for his vindictiveness. His brother had been brutally murdered, and John went in search of the murderer to kill him. They met in a place where the murderer could not escape. It was on Good Friday. The murderer was unarmed, and seeing he could not escape John Gualbert, who was fully armed, he fell on his knees with his arms extended in the form of a cross, and besought Gualbert for the love of Jesus crucified on that day, to forgive him his crime. For the love of his crucified Saviour, John Gualbert conquered himself, forgave his enemy, embraced him affectionately, left the world, became a saint and founded a religious order. Those who, like John Gualbert, nobly forgive their enemies for the love of Jesus crucified, become saints, and those who will not forgive their enemies, become reprobates!

II. There is no Salvation Possible for Him Who Will Not Forgive His Enemy.

"With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged" (Mat. 7. 2). We cannot obtain the forgiveness of our sins from God, unless we forgive those who offend us. This is what our divine Saviour expressly teaches us in His admirable prayer, the Our Father: "Forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors" (Mat. 6. 12). This prayer is a contract between us and God, for it means: "Lord, do to me as I have done to my neighbor; imitate thy servant. I have forgiven those who have offended me; deign, therefore, to forgive me the sins I have committed against Thee" (St. Greg. of Nyssa). "Forgive," says Jesus to us, "and you shall be forgiven" (Luke 6. 37). But he who refuses to forgive his enemy, practically speaks

thus to God when he recites the Our Father: "Lord, I will not forgive those who have offended me; therefore, I beseech Thee not to forgive me either!" And what is the result of such a prayer? "If you will not forgive men," says Jesus Christ, "neither will your Father forgive you your offenses" (Mat. 6. 15). No means of salvation will avail him who does not forgive his fellow-men.

1. Not prayer. All prayers whatever are essentially contained in the Our Father; and as I have just proved the Our Father of him who refuses to pardon his enemies is turned into a prayer for his eternal reprobation.

2. Not almsgiving, although our divine Saviour says: "Give alms, and behold all things are clean unto you" (Luke 11. 41). But all almsgiving without the love of the neighbor does not avail for salvation, as St. Paul declares: "If I were to distribute all my goods to the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13. 3).

3. Neither the holy Sacrifice of the Mass nor holy Communion. "If thou hast anything against thy brother, and art already at the altar," says Jesus Christ, "leave there thy gift, and first go and be reconciled with thy brother" (Mat. 5. 24). He who bears wilful hatred in his heart against his neighbor, is in the state of mortal sin, and would be guilty of a horrid sacrilege, were he to receive holy Communion in such a state.

4. Not works of penance. In themselves these works of penance, of mortification and self-denial, these austerities greatly promote salvation, but remember "judgment without mercy to him who showeth not mercy" (James 2. 13).

5. Not the sacrament of penance. However great, heinous and numerous the crimes of a sinner, the priest can forgive them all, if he sincerely repents of them and confesses them. But as to him who bears hatred to his neighbor, no priest, no bishop, no, not even the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, can forgive him who does not forgive his enemy from his heart.

6. Not even martyrdom can save him who refuses to forgive his enemy. Thus speaks St. Paul: "And if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13. 3). In the early Church, during a terrible persecution of the Christians, there lived two very intimate friends, who were Christians, Nicephorus and Sapricius. One day they had a falling out, and conceived a bitter hatred towards each other. Some time after the persecution broke out, and soon Sapricius was arrested as a Christian and imprisoned. Nicephorus, repenting of his hatred, visited Sapricius in prison, and on his knees begged his forgiveness; but Sapricius spurned him disdainfully. Sapricius was brought before the pagan judge and ordered to offer sacrifice to the pagan false gods. Sapricius steadfastly refused to apostatize. He was subjected to frightful torments, but remained constant in the faith. When Sapricius was led out of the court to be executed, Nicephorus again approached him, and kneeling down before him, cried out: "Martyr of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee to forgive me." But Sapricius turned away from him in scorn. On the way to the place of execution Nicephorus managed to renew his supplication in like manner, but with the same result. At the place of execution while the preparations were being made to behead Sapricius, Nicephorus again knelt before him, saying: "Martyr of Jesus Christ, I implore thy forgiveness"; but Sapricius turned away from him with a look of hatred. When the headsman told Sapricius to lay his head on the block, he said: "No, for I am ready to offer incense to the gods, as the emperor requires." And this he did by offering incense to the statues of the pagan deities erected there, and thus his hatred made him fall into the crime of apostasy and forfeit the crown of martyrdom, which was already within his grasp! But Nicephorus witnessing this, exclaimed: "I am a Christian! I am ready to suffer death for His sake!" The magistrate whose office it was to pre-

side at the execution of the faithful Christians, at once seized Nicephorus and had him beheaded instead of Sapricius!

There can be no forgiveness, no salvation, no heaven for him who refuses to give up his hatred and to forgive his enemy. He who does not forgive is no true Christian, no follower of Jesus Christ. For what does Jesus Christ teach us? (Show the crucifix.) His first words on the cross are an earnest appeal, a fervent prayer to His heavenly Father to forgive His enemies, who were then engaged in heaping insults, derision and bitter mockery on Him; He even excuses their crime! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing!" If you do not imitate Jesus Christ forgiving His enemies, His blood, shed for your salvation, will not profit you, but will demand your damnation!

In fine, let us imitate Abraham, and avoid all causes and occasions of anger and quarreling. "Let there be no quarrel, I beseech thee, between me and thee; . . . for we are brethren" (Gen. 13. 8).

REVENGE

"He that seeketh to revenge himself, shall find vengeance from the Lord, who will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbor, if he hath hurt thee; and then shall thy sins be forgiven thee, when thou prayest. Man to man reserveth anger, and doth he seek remedy of God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and doth he entreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh, nourisheth anger, and doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who shall obtain pardon for his sins? Remember thy last things, and let enmity cease. . . . Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbor" (Eccli. 28. 1–8).

I. Revenge is Unbecoming in a Man, in a Christian.

1. To revenge injuries with anger and spite is mean, dishonorable, and forbidden. "But I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you and pray for them that persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, upon the just and the unjust" (Mat. 5. 44, 45). "Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place unto wrath, for it is written: Revenge is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink. For, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good" (Rom. 12. 19–21). He who takes revenge on his enemy, greatly offends God, for our divine Saviour says expressly: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Mat. 25. 40). Not only God and the saints consider taking revenge as dishonorable, but even all sensible people look upon it as mean and unmanly, and admire those who follow the injunction

of our divine Saviour: "You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other" (Mat. 5. 38, 39).

2. To bear injuries like St. Stephen shows true honor, real courage, moral bravery and genuine fortitude, for only he who is endowed with these qualities will bear injuries, etc., with patience and equanimity, and thus control his angry passions. "Taking revenge," says St. Ambrose, "is not an act of courage, but a sign of weakness." "To resent an insult," says St. John Chrysostom, "is a sign of a weak and abject character; but to forgive is a proof of a great and noble mind." (Illustrate by example of a large, noble dog giving no heed to the barking of a little cur behind him.) "He who takes revenge," says Seneca, "thereby acknowledges that he feels the insult." Even the revengeful cannot but admire those who bear insults with meekness without showing the least resentment. Such persons are, in some manner, Godlike, for they imitate God's patience and longanimity towards those who outrage Him. "What if God (were) willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, (but) endured (endures) with much patience vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction (by their sins)?" (Rom. 9. 22). "But Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance" (Wisd. 11. 24). (Illustrate by the example of Jesus on the cross praying for and excusing His enemies; by the example of the martyrs, such as St. Stephen, and of other saints, such as St. John Gualbert.)

II. Revege is Unjust.

1. In the first place, it is a transgression of both the civil and natural law. The revengeful man constitutes himself judge in his own case. Such a one considers the injury done him as far greater than it really is. He judges

passionately, not reasonably, but rather against all reason. He cannot be judge in his own case, for he lacks impartiality, and a judge, to be just, must be impartial and swayed by no passion or prejudice. Moreover, if every one were permitted to take revenge, it would endanger the very existence of civil government, of society itself, for justice is one of its chief bases.

2. Secondly, it is contrary to the divine law. (See proofs in the texts of Introduction and I.) The revengeful man offends God in His honor by usurping His prerogative, for God is the supreme Lawgiver and Judge. He offends also against the love of his neighbor, whom he is required to love as he loves himself.

3. Thirdly, the revengeful man sins against his own interest. "Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged" (Mat. 7. 1, 2). "If you will forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offenses. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses" (Mat. 6. 14, 15). "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven" (Luke 6. 37). In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus Christ has taught us to say: "Forgive us our trespasses AS we forgive those who trespass against us." The revengeful thus ask God not to forgive them their sins, but to inflict on them condign punishment! God is willing to forgive us even the greatest crimes, provided we forgive the slight or insignificant offenses of our fellow-servants. (Relate the parable of the servant who owed ten thousand talents, Mat. 18.)

Therefore "judgment without mercy to him that showeth not mercy" (James 2. 13).

ALMSGIVING

"Jesus called together His disciples, and said: I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me for three days and have not what to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way" (Mat. 15. 32).

Four thousand men, besides the women and children, followed Jesus in an uninhabited region without food. And Jesus, after feeding their souls with His divine doctrine, would also feed their bodies before dismissing them, lest they should faint on the way. What a beautiful sight it was to see our divine Saviour caring for their temporal wants, interrupting His instructions and performing a miracle to feed so great a multitude! As Christians it is our duty to imitate our divine Model in His practical compassion on the needy.

I. Almsgiving is an Obligation.

For those who are in good or easy circumstances almsgiving is not a mere counsel or a supererogatory good work, but an express law, an indispensable obligation.

1. In the Old Law we read: "There shall be no poor nor beggar among you" (Deut. 15. 4). "Tell not thy friend: Go and come back, to-morrow I will give thee something, if thou canst give it immediately" (Prov. 3. 28). "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself and not be heard" (Prov. 21. 13). "Deal thy bread to the hungry" (Is. 58. 7). "Give alms out of thy substance and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a lit-

tle. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms delivers from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God to all them that give it" (Tob. 4. 7–12).

2. Our divine Saviour makes almsgiving an obligation, for He says: "Give alms" (Luke 12. 33). "Give to every one that asketh" (Luke 6. 30). "Whoever shall give to these that are least a glass of cold water, amen I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mat. 10. 42). "Order the rich of this world," says St. Paul, "to treasure unto themselves a good foundation for the future" (1 Tim. 6. 17, 19). "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation" (James 1. 27). At the general judgment the Sovereign Judge will say: "Amen I say to you: As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Mat. 25. 40. See v. 45).

3. The precept of almsgiving is founded on the divine law of charity. All Christians form but one body of which Jesus is the head and the various members sympathize with and assist one another.

4. It is founded also on the law of justice. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 23. 1). The world and all its goods belong to God, and man has only the use of them; when he dies, he cannot take any earthly goods along with him. Man is bound to use the goods of this world in accordance with the will of God, who has cared for the poor by commanding almsgiving to those who have more than they need for themselves. "To Thee is the poor man abandoned" (Ps. 10. 14). Just as God effects the salvation of mankind especially through the ministry of certain men, so also He leaves it to those who are in comparatively easy circumstances to provide for the wants of the needy. "When you give alms," says St. Ambrose, "you pay a debt you owe to the poor, and do not

bestow a mere favor." Hence he who neglects almsgiving, fails to pay his debts.

5. The obligation of almsgiving is binding under pain of grievous sin, for those who fail therein shall be condemned on the day of judgment, because "as long as you did it not to one of these My least brethren, you did it not unto Me" (Mat. 25. 45).

II. Order to Be Observed in Almsgiving.

1. We are obliged to give to those who are in extreme want. "Feed him who is perishing with hunger," says St. Ambrose, "for if you do not, you are guilty of murder."

2. Give alms to the poor who are in ordinary want. The rich man was "buried in hell" for failing to do so.

3. Give what is superfluous, that is, what is beyond or above your own wants and the wants of those depending on you. "Remember," says St. Augustine, "that the superfluities of the rich are necessaries for the poor, and when you possess superfluities, you keep in your possession what belongs to the poor."

"But I have nothing superfluous!" Is it necessary for you to live so high, to have all those costly dresses, those amusements, banquets, etc.?

"But I have a large family to provide for!" But you need not bring them up so stylishly, or amass a great fortune which they will squander after your death! "If you have six children," say the Fathers of the Church, "count Jesus Christ in His poor as your seventh, and give the poor the share of Jesus Christ!" Imitate holy Job atoning for his own sins and the sins of his children, and "redeem your sins" and those of your children "with alms and with works of mercy to the poor" (Dan. 4. 24).

"I cannot afford it; the times are too hard and everything is so dear!" Yes, and how much harder are not the times for the poor!

"I must provide for my old age, for a rainy day!" How much? How long will you yet live? How much will you take along with you on your great journey? The best provision for that journey are your good works, among which almsgiving should hold a prominent place!

"But there are so many worthless, indolent poor, so many drunkards and hypocrites!" Yes; but this is no reason for your refusing alms to all indiscriminately. The honest poor would then have to starve! Ah, if you would realize who it is that asks you for an alms! It is Jesus Christ Himself, for He considers as done to Himself what you do for the poor!

III. Advantages of Almsgiving.

1. Temporal advantages. God usually sends prosperity to the generous, or some other temporal blessings. The widow of Sarepta is an example. (Luke 4. 26; 3 Kings 17. 9–16.) Whilst, on the contrary, misfortunes befall those who fail to give alms to the needy (Ps. 108). How are many rich persons ruined? Not by almsgiving! St. John the Almoner, bishop of Alexandria, was wont to say: "Even if all men were to come to Alexandria for assistance, it would not diminish my liberality, nor decrease my means."

2. Spiritual advantages. Almsgiving is a very profitable means of obtaining forgiveness of sins, for the prophet Daniel did not hesitate to say to the great king of Babylon, Nabuchodonosor: "Redeem thy sins with alms" (Dan. 4). "Give alms," says our divine Saviour, "and behold all things are clean unto you" (Luke 11. 41). "Water," says the Holy Ghost, "quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins" (Eccli. 3. 33). "Almsgiving causeth to find mercy" (Tob. 12. 9). Therefore almsgiving satisfies for sins, obtains the conversion of sinners, as we read in the Acts of Apostles. Cornelius, the Roman centurion, deserved to be the first pagan converted to the religion of

Christ, through his prayers and alms. An angel appeared to him one day at Cæsarea, and said to him: "Thy prayers and thy alms are ascended for a memorial in the sight of God" (Acts 10. 4); and told him to send to Joppe for St. Peter who would instruct him. Almsgiving, moreover, increases the merits of the giver. "It will increase the fruits of your justice" (2 Cor. 9. 10).

"In Joppe there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which, by interpretation, is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber. And whereas Lydda was nigh to Joppe, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not be slack [slow] to come unto them. And Peter, rising up, went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber. And all the widows stood about him weeping, and showing him the coats and the garments which Dorcas had made for them. And they all being put forth, Peter kneeling down prayed, and turning to the body, he said: Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. And giving her his hand, he lifted her up. And when he had called the saints and the widows, he presented her alive" (Acts 9. 36–41). In like manner, on judgment-day, in presence of the whole universe, the poor, who have been the recipients of your alms will show the divine judge all that you have given them, and He will say to you: "Whatever you have done to the least of My brethren, you have done it to Me. Therefore, come, ye blessed of My Father, and possess the kingdom prepared for you." Amen.

To those who have neglected the obligation of almsgiving, like the rich man, He will say: Depart from Me; "thy money be with thee unto perdition" (Acts 8. 20).

THE RICH AND THE POOR

"Why do you consume My people and grind the faces of the poor, saith the Lord God of hosts?" (Is. 3. 15).

I. The Rich.

The majority of the rich look down on the poor, and nevertheless, the poor are necessary for the happiness of the rich. The rich forget that God has given to the poor claims on them. How often certain rich persons take advantage of the poor and even oppress them, whenever the occasion offers; and yet this is a sin crying to heaven for vengeance.

1. It is uncharitable to despise and show contempt for the poor on account of their poverty, and much more so to reproach them with it, especially when it is due to circumstances beyond their control. Pride and wealth usually go together. There are rich persons who consider it a humiliation for them to treat the poor familiarly and as human beings. How bitterly must the poor feel such conduct! What does the Creator of all men think of this? "He that despiseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker" (Prov. 17. 15). What would the rich be without the poor? If all men were rich, the rich would be obliged to work. "The rich and the poor meet one another; the Lord hath made them both" (Prov. 22. 2). They mutually depend on one another. Remember that "we have brought nothing into this world, and without doubt we shall take nothing hence" (1 Tim. 6. 7). The way we receive a person that comes to us is usually a sign of our interior sentiments towards him. "The poor will speak with supplications and the rich will speak roughly" (Prov. 18. 23). "I dare not go there, for that rich person will speak angrily to me."

"The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to him that lendeth" (Prov. 22. 7). "My son, in thy good deeds make no complaint, and when thou givest anything, add not grief by an evil word. Shall not the dew assuage the heat? So also the good word is better than the gift. . . . A fool will upbraid bitterly, and a gift of one ill-taught [ill-mannered] consumeth the eyes" (Eccli. 18. 15–18). How the poor relate with gratitude the charitable deeds and the kind words of the rich!

The hard-hearted rich have no pity; but the savage-hearted embitter misery by harsh words. The indolent rich assert that the poor do not work so well as they should, and that, if they would work better, they would not be so poor. They have not the least compassion for even the virtuous poor; they glory in their wealth, and make use of every means, whether lawful or unlawful, to increase it. To such rich persons the prophet addresses this stinging reproach: "Woe to you that join house to house and lay field to field, even to the end of the place; shall you alone dwell in the midst of the earth?" (Is. 5. 8).

2. What is compassion? It is to divide suffering with those who suffer, to help them to bear it, to deplore their misfortune, and, if possible, to remedy it. Compassion is a law of nature, for naturally "like helps like." It is also a social law, for society cannot exist without it. It is also a law of self-love, for he who is compassionate towards others, fares well in time and in eternity. It is also the law of grace, for it requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. There are persons, however, who show compassion for animals, but none at all for the poor, for their fellow-men! "Despise not," says the Holy Ghost, "the hungry soul, and provoke not the poor in his want" (Eccli. 4. 2). Would that all, especially the rich, could say with holy Job (29. 15): "I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame. I was the father of the poor." A miser who has once bestowed assistance on a poor person, will con-

stantly refer to it to prevent him from forgetting it; he expects the poor man to thank him constantly for it, that he may thereby be reminded of it, being persuaded that said assistance to the poor man gives him a constant claim on him for indemnification! Whatever such a man gives to the poor, is prompted, not by generosity, but by pride! There are even certain misers who never bestow alms, not even on the most deserving, the most helpless poor. To such the Holy Ghost says: "Turn not away thine eyes from the poor, for fear of anger, and leave not to them that ask thee to curse thee behind thy back. For the prayer of him that curseth thee in the bitterness of his soul, shall be heard, for He that made him shall hear him" (Eccli. 4. 5, 6).

3. Many rich persons take advantage of the poor, of the workmen, especially in hard times, to give them less than a living wage, to raise the rent, to defer payment, or to commit some other injustice. He who is guilty of such dishonest practices, says holy Job (20. 18), "shall be punished for all that he did; according to the multitude of his devices, so also shall he suffer." "Do no violence to the poor," says the Holy Ghost, "because he is poor; do not oppress the needy, because the Lord will judge his cause, and will afflict them that have afflicted his soul" (Prov. 22. 22, 23). "He that soweth injustice shall reap evils" (Prov. 22. 8). But "the lips of many shall bless him that is liberal of his bread" (Eccli. 31. 28). "He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed, for of his bread he hath given to the poor" (Prov. 22. 9).

What experience shows: the rich who are kind and charitable to the poor are blessed even in their temporal affairs; no rich man has ever been ruined by his kindness and generosity towards the poor; God blesses those who compassionate and assist the poor. Where God's blessing is, nothing is lost; but where His curse is, nothing prospers. The misers, the hard-hearted rich are more exposed to suf-

fer loss through the unfaithfulness of their servants, of their workmen, etc., than those who are kind and compassionate. The latter are loved and respected, whilst the former are disliked and despised, and every one considers himself justified in getting all he can out of them. Bear in mind that "the fear of the Lord is the glory of the rich, and of the honorable and of the poor. Despise not a just man that is poor, and do not magnify a sinful man that is rich" (Eccli. 10. 25, 26). "Judgment without mercy to him that showeth not mercy" (James 2. 13).

II. The Poor.

"All the days of the poor are evil; a secure mind is like a continual feast" (Prov. 15. 15). Many of the poor do not know how to bear and appreciate their poverty in a Christian manner. They unjustly murmur against both God and the world. Had they a more practical and lively faith, they would obtain in their hardships and privations more blessings from God, more consolation, more contentment in their state.

1. Quite a number of the poor are ungrateful to those who assist them, for they do not keep their promises. "Lend to thy neighbor in the time of his need, and pay thou thy neighbor again in due time. Keep thy word and deal faithfully with him, and thou shalt always find what is necessary for thee. Many have looked upon a thing lent them as a thing found, and have given trouble to them that helped them. Till they receive, they kiss the hands of the lender, and in promises they humble their voice; but when they should repay, they will ask time, and will turn tedious and murmuring words, and will complain of the times; and if he be able to pay, he will stand off, he will scarcely pay one half, and will count it, as if he found it; but if not, he will defraud him of his money, and shall get him for an enemy without cause; and he will pay him with reproaches and curses, and, instead of honor and good turn,

will repay him injuries" (Eccli. 29. 2–9). Some persons seldom or never pay their debts; they do not even try to pay them, or refuse to pay them, although they have the means to do so; they pay their debts only when compelled to do so. It is sinful to contract debts, through one's own fault, especially if great difficulty is apprehended for paying them. Not a few persons are too indolent to work; others work indeed, but, not knowing or caring to be economical, spend money faster than they can earn it. Many even squander their earnings in gratifying their passions. Many already overburdened with debts, wishing to be fashionable, live in style, and, of course, get always deeper and deeper into debt. And some persons are so perverse as to repay their creditors, and even their benefactors, with detraction, slander, abuse and insult, in order to dispense themselves from the duty of gratitude!

2. Employees are bound in conscience to fulfil their engagements towards their employers, to work faithfully for them, to take good care of their goods, and to avoid causing them any loss or damage. Hence they should avoid indolence, loss of time, all carelessness in their work, as well as all wasting or destruction, or injury of goods. They should beware of committing injustice under the plea of secret compensation. Moreover, it is sinful to prevent others from working by violence or other unlawful means.

3. Employees have no right to appropriate to themselves or to give away the goods of their employer, even were it only a trifle, or were their "employer very rich, and would not miss it!" Some take or give away their employer's goods, saying: "I need it more than he does; I give it to some poor person; the work is too hard, the pay too small, the food is too poor, or insufficient."

Bear in mind that "the poor man is glorified by his discipline and fear [of God]; and there is a man that is honored for his wealth" (well used) (Eccli. 10. 33).

SUSPICION AND RASH JUDGMENT

By the law of the love of charity our neighbor enjoys the right that we should think well of him, speak well of him and act well towards him. And, nevertheless, many are the faults committed against the love we owe our neighbor. There are two kinds of faults against charity, the interior and the exterior. The exterior faults are usually the outward manifestation of the interior, that is, of our thoughts and judgments against our neighbor. The principal interior faults are unjust suspicion and rash judgment.

1. UNJUST SUSPICION. "Charity," says St. Paul, "thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13. 5). Unjust suspicion consists in suspecting, without sufficient reason and from mere appearances, that our neighbor is guilty of a certain fault, of some evil intention. We are not allowed to suspect our neighbor as guilty of some evil, unless we have evident and conclusive proof. As the Imitation of Christ says, "we are more apt to believe evil of others than good." Usually he who suspects his neighbor of some evil deed or design, does not stop there; he soon goes a step further, and judges him actually guilty of that evil; this is

2. RASH JUDGMENT. It consists in judging our neighbor to be bad or guilty of some fault, or of some evil design, although we have no sufficient proof of that, but are led to form such a judgment by prejudice, natural aversion, or from mere appearances. Both unjust suspicion and especially rash judgment may be even grievous sins if they regard very grievous matter. We are bound, therefore, to do all we can to overcome all unjust suspicions and all rash judgments concerning our neighbor. He who yields

to them in little things will soon yield to them in matters of greater importance.

3. Motives for Avoiding Rash Judgments. The first motive is that, on their account, we may not be severely judged by God and men, for, as our divine Saviour says, "with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged" (Mat. 7. 2). God frequently punishes those who judged their neighbor rashly, by permitting them to fall into faults similar to those they suspected or condemned in others. Often a person, who is addicted to a certain fault, is led thereby to suspect or judge others as guilty of the same faults, according to this saying of the Holy Ghost: "The fool, when he walketh in the way, whereas he himself is a fool, esteemeth all men fools" (Eccles. 10. 3).

Secondly, if we were to judge from mere appearances, we should be induced to condemn St. John Baptist and our divine Saviour Himself as grievously wanting in charity and guilty of the sin of anger, on account of their severe condemnation of the hypocrisy and other evil deeds of the Pharisees!

Thirdly, rash judgments, proceeding usually from aversion, prejudice and envy, are full of malice. Charity induces us to throw the cloak of charity over our neighbor's apparent faults, for "charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4. 8). We should never condemn a man, unless he be proved guilty. Rash judgments often proceed from pride, for, says St. Bernard, "he that is vile in his own estimation, will not undertake to judge his neighbor." They proceed sometimes from levity of mind, which induces us to judge of things without mature consideration, and to "see the mote in our brother's eye, whilst we do not see the beam that is in our own eye" (Mat. 7. 3).

Fourthly, a person that appears imperfect on account of a few slight failings, may be far better and more holy than others whose conduct seems to be faultless. Instead of looking at the faults of others and misjudging them and

preferring ourselves to them, let us rather look at their virtues and imitate them, and be as lenient towards their shortcomings as we are towards our own. "Whilst thou are watching others," says the Imitation, "remember that they also watch thee. Therefore watch over thyself, bestir thyself, admonish thyself, and whatever others may do, be sure not to neglect thyself."

Finally, he who judges his neighbor usurps the rights of God Himself, who alone has the right to judge men, and offends our divine Saviour Himself, who considers whatever we do to our neighbor as done to Himself.

How to Avoid Rash Judgments. In the first place, we should never judge internal things, such as thoughts and intentions. "Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart" (1 Kings 16. 7). Secondly, we should not even judge the wicked, for like St. Mary Magdalen, St. Augustine and St. Paul, they may yet become great saints. Thirdly, we have no right to condemn a person for a few faults. Finally, we ought to excuse our fellow-men, and if we cannot excuse their actions, we should seek to excuse their intention, alleging, at least, extenuating circumstances, such as, accident, surprise, bodily indisposition, great provocation, violent temptation, and say: "Were I placed in similar circumstances, I would probably do even worse." "We understand well how to excuse and justify our own actions, and yet we are so unwilling to accept the excuses of others" (Imitation of Christ). Let us judge ourselves severely, and bear in mind that it does not belong to us to judge our neighbor.

RASH JUDGMENTS

"They were watching Him" (Luke 14. 1).

The Pharisees were watching Jesus, in order to detect Him transgressing the Law of Moses, and then publicly to accuse Him of doing so, in order to encompass His ruin. In like manner, there are some who are constantly watching others, in order to manifest their faults in public. "Detract not one another, my brethren. He that detracteth his brother, or he that judgeth his brother, detracteth the law, and judgeth the law. But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver and Judge, that is able to destroy and to deliver. But who art thou that judgest thy brother?" (James 4. 11–13).

1. No matter what their origin may be, rash judgments are contrary to charity. Even good actions are liable to be misrepresented, misinterpreted and condemned, according to the testimony of our divine Saviour: "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say: He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say: Behold a man that is a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Mat. 11. 18, 19). Even our neighbor's intention is falsely interpreted. "Do you not judge within yourselves, and are become judges of unjust thoughts?" (James 2. 4). It is wrong, very wrong, even if it is mere gossip. How many exaggerations and falsehoods are added! We cannot judge from mere appearances. Of our divine Saviour the prophet says: "He shall not judge according to the sight of the eyes, nor reprove according to the hearing of the ears" (Is. 11. 3). "What man knoweth the things of a

man, but the spirit of man that is in him?" (1 Cor. 2. 11). But, you say, "I have heard others say so!" It is uncharitable, even if true. "Remember," says St. Augustine, "that no one likes to be judged by others in like manner." True charity always puts the best interpretation on everything, for "charity is patient, is benignant; it doth not act wickedly; it thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13. 4). We should imitate our divine Saviour. His first words on the cross were: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23. 34).

2. "The chief priests and Pharisees gathered a council —" (against Jesus) (John 11. 47). Who were those that assembled together in council? The highest and most important personages among the Jews for the purpose of condemning to death Jesus Christ, because all the Jews flocked to Him on account of His preaching and miracles. We would naturally suppose that the result of their deliberations would accord with wisdom and justice; but such a supposition is false, for the result of their deliberations was a most crying injustice.

We have, each of us, an interior tribunal to which we summon our neighbor; its judgments, like that of the Jewish Sanhedrin, are usually rash and unjust. St. Thomas tells us that three things are required to form a just judgment: authority in the person of the judge, the science or knowledge of the case in the mind of the judge, and uprightness in his heart. The aforesaid council possessed none of these three requisites. Our own judgments of our neighbor usually lack all the three conditions or qualities of a just judgment.

In the first place, they lack jurisdiction or competent authority. God alone possesses the essential and supreme authority to judge men. "O God, give to the king Thy judgment, and justice to the son of the king" (Ps. 71. 2). "The Father hath given all judgment to the Son" (John 5. 22). But "who art thou that judgest another man's

servant? To his own lord he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14. 3). We should not judge others, "for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. . . . Let us not therefore judge one another any more" (Rom. 14. 10, 13). "Whoever judgeth his brother," says St. Jerome, "usurps the authority of God." But on the day of the general judgment, "Know you not that the saints shall judge this world?" (1 Cor. 6. 2). "But do not judge before the time, until the Lord shall come" (1 Cor. 4. 5). Even our divine Saviour, when He was on earth, did not undertake to judge any one, for He said to Nicodemus: "God sent not His Son to judge the world" (John. 3. 17). He will judge, however, when the appointed day shall have come. "When I shall take a time, I will judge justices" (Ps. 74. 3). There is a time for judging and a time to show mercy. We are not allowed to judge our superiors, for God says to them by the prophet: "Whoever toucheth you, toucheth the apple of My eye" (Zach. 2. 8). "Touch ye not My anointed, and do no evil to My prophets" (Ps. 104. 15). "Thou shalt not speak ill of the gods" (Exod. 22. 28). Why was Mary, the sister of Moses, covered with leprosy? Because she murmured against Moses. We should honor Jesus Christ Himself in our superiors. "Be subject (not only to the good and gentle), but also to the froward" (1 Pet. 2. 18). "Judge not, that you may not be judged" (Mat. 7. 1).

In the second place, we lack the necessary knowledge in our judgments concerning our neighbor. "Vain are the sons of men; the sons of men are liars in the balances, that by vanity they may together deceive" (Ps. 61. 10). We judge from mere appearances. "Man seeth those things which appear, but God beholdeth the heart" (1 Kings 16. 7). "God is the searcher of hearts and reins" (Ps. 7. 10). "I will search Jerusalem with lamps" (Soph. 1. 12). We judge the intentions by the deeds. But how wrong we are in saying: "I pay attention to his ac-

tions, and I can thereby find out the reason why he acts." A certain action may be performed from either of two opposite intentions; for instance, the Jews punished by Pharao, and punished by God. Pharao punished them to tyrannize over them, for their destruction; but God punished them through zeal, for their amendment. Jesus was condemned to death by Pilate to please the Jews, and was condemned to death also by His heavenly Father for the salvation of mankind; and in this condemnation God is holy, says St. Augustine, "and man is guilty." "God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebr. 4. 12). Socrates performs an action; why should you attribute to him a bad, rather than a good intention, since he may be moved by either in performing it? "My secret is mine" (Is. 24. 16). Moreover, how often do we judge from mere hearsay! Should we not rather imitate God Himself? "The cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is multiplied, and their sin is become exceedingly grievous; I will go down and see whether they have done according to the cry that is come to Me, or whether it be not so, that I may know" (Gen. 18. 20, 21). We frequently take vain suspicions and conjectures as proofs, and say: "I cannot help seeing what is so very plain." If you did not desire it to be plain, you would perceive your illusion, and see the matter in quite another light. How often have you not yourself been ill-judged? Pray with St. Augustine: "O Lord, grant that I may know myself, that I may know Thee."

Finally, we judge our neighbor through prejudice, aversion, spite, jealousy, self-interest or other corrupt motives. It was jealousy and self-interest that prompted the unjust judgment of the Jewish council against our divine Saviour. "We know that this man is a sinner" (John 9. 24). When we need some one's services, we make very much of him. But if he stands in our way, even his good qualities appear evil to us; such is the fruit of envy. No confidence

can be placed in the decisions of a judge, in the testimony of a witness, if they are interested parties. To judge our neighbor justly and fairly, we should be free from every prejudice. But in practice this is usually impossible. Therefore, we are wholly unfit to judge our neighbor.

CHARITY IN SPEECH

I. We Should Say no Evil of Our Neighbor.

True Christian charity towards our neighbor consists in doing good to him, much good, indeed, as much as we can, even at our own expense; and all this for Christ's sake. True charity dissimulates, covers up, as much as possible, our neighbor's defects by keeping silence concerning them, or by excusing them, that is, covering them up with the cloak of charity, as our divine Saviour did, when He prayed on the cross to His heavenly Father for His murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23. 34). Enormous, indeed, was the sin of the Jewish priests and rulers and of His executioners, and nevertheless Jesus diminishes its enormity and excuses them by alleging their ignorance. He could not excuse their hatred, their enmity, their envy, nor the ingratitude of the people, the lies and perjury of the false witnesses, the cowardice and injustice of Pilate, nor the cruelty of His executioners. His charity could find but one thing in their favor, their lack of knowledge of His dignity as the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind; and He mentions it to His heavenly Father as an excuse for their horrible crime and a reason for forgiving them. This is our Model! And, nevertheless,

1. Detractors abound among us. Detraction is the unjust manifestation of our neighbor's hidden fault or defect. He is guilty of detraction who unjustly, or without sufficient cause, manifests his neighbor's hidden faults, or exaggerates his known faults, or puts an evil interpretation on his good deeds by imputing to him an evil or selfish intention therein, or by denying or belittling his good deeds

or the just praise given him. The sin is grievous or venial according to the harm the detraction does to the neighbor. "The detractor defiles his own soul," says the Holy Ghost, "and is hateful to God and to men" (Eccli. 21. 31). If he sometimes meets with persons who applaud him, who excite him to detraction for their amusement or curiosity, they are, nevertheless, shy of him, for they have reason to believe that he will publish their faults in their absence to another set of listeners. There are some who can hardly ever speak without defaming the absent. We should greatly abhor the vice of detraction, and put into practice the wise admonition of St. Alphonsus: "In our conversations let us always speak well of every one; in fact, we should speak of others as we would wish them to speak of us." Let us never say of the absent what we would refrain from saying in their presence.

If some one is guilty of detraction in our presence, we should not in any way encourage him to continue, for we would thereby become the accomplices of his sin; but we should either admonish him or show by our behavior, that such language is highly displeasing to us. "Hedge in thy ears with thorns; hear not a wicked tongue" (Eccli. 28. 28). Let us act so, that no one will venture to be guilty of detraction in our presence. If in our power, we ought to defend the victim of the detraction, or at least excuse his intention, if not his fault.

2. Slanderers are not wanting among us. Slander is a wilful imputation to our neighbor of defects which he has not, or of faults or sins which he has not committed. If such defects or faults are serious or capable of proving very injurious to the neighbor, the slander is a mortal sin, in fact, it is as many mortal sins as there are listeners to the slander. Slander, being a false charge of evil doing, is a greater sin than detraction. The detractor tells the truth, though unjustly, but the slanderer tells a wilful lie.

3. Tale-bearers also are found among us. "The tale-bearer defiles his own soul and shall be hated by all; he also shall be hateful who shall abide with him" (Eccli. 21. 31). "So and So said this about you" is more to be dreaded than even a thrust with a poisoned sword; and if the tale-bearer adds: "But please do not tell him anything about this, nor let him know I told you," it is an aggravation of the life-long pain and harm caused. "Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh His soul detesteth, . . . him that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6. 16, 19). "Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbor, let it die within thee" (Eccli. 19. 10). "This means," says St. Alphonsus, "that you should not, in any way, let it appear that you have heard the same."

4. Unseasonable jokes and jests also are common and contrary to charity. Innocent and purely pleasant jokes are neither sinful nor forbidden, and often help to enliven innocent conversation. But to make a certain person the butt of our jokes, to overtease him, to ridicule him, his ways, his speech, to mimic him constantly, to nickname him, is always contrary to charity. How would you like others to turn you and your ways everywhere into ridicule on account of something unseasonable you did or said? Why should you thus treat your neighbor? Should you not refrain from "doing unto others what you do not wish them to do unto you?" Take Blessed Gabriel, the Passionist, as a model; of him it was said: "In his exterior behavior, in his conversations, he was always affable, amiable, condescending, whenever it could be done without fault or imperfection; he was ever cheerful, moderately pleasant, and always ready to give up his own views when they differed from those of his companions." St. Francis de Sales, whose charity for his neighbor was so remarkable, was always very much pained whenever he heard his neighbor turned into ridicule. He would then look sad, and would endeavor to change the subject of conversation; but

if he could not succeed in doing so, he would admonish those who were in fault, saying: "Who has given you the right to make merry at the expense of your neighbor? How would you like being treated yourself in that way?"

But, you object, "why should any one be offended at such trifles?" And who has given you the right to offend others in such trivial matters? "The lighter the offense," says St. Bernard, "the more easy it is for you to avoid it." Charity requires us to avoid saying or doing anything to displease our neighbor.

II. He Who Really Loves His Neighbor Always Speaks Well of Him.

The saints were wont to praise others and to avoid praising or speaking unnecessarily of themselves. "How much is he loved by God and by men," says St. Alphonsus, "who always speaks well of his neighbor!" "He who never speaks ill of any one," says St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, "is deserving of being canonized." Why do we so seldom speak well of our neighbor? In the first place, because we have but little esteem for him, or rather, because we love God so little. Genuine love of God induces us to esteem and love Him above all, and to respect our neighbor as the image and the property of God. Hence, if we truly love God as we should, we shall also respect and love our neighbor, and our respect and love for him will impel us to speak only well of him. St. Ignatius always spoke well of every one, so that each one felt sure that the saint was his true friend. The conversation of St. Alphonsus was always edifying and so much to the advantage of his neighbor, that his companions could after every recreation write down all he had said as being profitable for their own sanctification. In the second place, if the love of God were the prime-mover of all our actions, we would be forgetful of our own selves, in order to edify our neighbor and contribute to his contentment and happiness. But one of

the best means of enkindling and preserving our love for our neighbor is the knowledge that others love us and speak well of us. Therefore we ought to make others happy by our charitable conversations, and this will make us also happy. There is no greater joy than to contribute to the happiness of others. The more humble our conversation, the more charitable and pleasing will it be. But, on the contrary, the more selfish our conversation, the more uncharitable and injurious also will it be.

St. Francis de Sales had a special horror of detraction. He was wont to say: "Could we but put a stop to the sin of detraction, we could prevent the greatest number of the sins committed. If an action has a hundred aspects, we should always consider none but its very best aspect." Whenever he was unable to attenuate a too evident fault, he would say: "How great is human misery! How violent are certain temptations! Were it not for divine grace we would do even worse and should already be in hell. Who knows if such persons will not be converted and become great saints like David and St. Augustine?"

Listeners to uncharitable conversation are as guilty as the speakers themselves, and deserve similar punishment from the divine justice. There would be but little uncharitable conversation, were there no willing listeners! Therefore willing listeners are as guilty as the detractors themselves.

DETRACTION

"Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbor? Let it die within thee, trusting it will not burst thee" (Eccli. 19. 10).

The world takes much delight in detraction, and, at the same time, greatly abhors it. And although nearly all are guilty of this sin, they, nevertheless, hardly scruple it and indulge in it as if it were merely a pastime.

I. The inducements to detraction are strong, the occasions, very frequent, and the pretexts seem good to many.

1. The natural inducements are talkativeness and the desire or passion for news. The inducements flowing from passion or malice, are dislike, aversion, jealousy and hatred. Another inducement is the miserable desire of pleasing others. "At the hearing of a word the fool [the wicked man] is in travail, as a woman groaning in bringing forth a child" (Eccli. 19. 11). Some persons can keep nothing secret; the more reasons they have for keeping silence about a matter disparaging to others, the more eager they are to manifest it; every moment they have no chance to communicate it to others appears an age to them. They usually begin to speak about it by saying that what they are about to tell is something confidential that must not be told to any one else! They wish to do all the telling themselves, in order to spare to others the task of doing so. And when they hear everybody talking about it, they wonder "how is this [matter] come to be known?" (Exod. 2. 14). When admonished to keep a matter secret, they make all kinds of protestations of never divulging it, not even to their best friends. But finding later on the secret so hard to keep, they fear "it would burst them" (see text), and they get others to help them to keep it.

Moreover, men are usually far more attentive to their neighbors' evil qualities and evil deeds than to their good qualities and deeds. Wherefore they have far more evil matter to converse about than their neighbor's virtues or good qualities. Furthermore, how natural it is for the suspicious, for those who have an aversion to, a dislike for, a jealousy of certain parties, to watch their failings, their foibles, so as to be able to gratify their passion, their malice, by manifesting to others the shortcomings and faults of those parties! Bitterness directs their tongue, hatred, envy, dislike fills their heart and urges them not merely to manifest, but to exaggerate the evil, and even to misrepresent the good they observed in those parties! Moreover, there are sometimes influential persons, persons in authority, leaders of public opinion, who are fond of hearing evil about their rivals or opponents, and who therefore encourage those who backbite them!

2. To find out evil things about others requires no art; to relate and exaggerate them is almost a universal custom; and to keep silence about those matters, although strictly prescribed by the great law of charity, is almost unknown! We daily perceive things that do not please us, and we describe or relate them as they appear to us not only in themselves, but rather as some inordinate passion represents them to us. We daily hear of many similar things, and without previously examining whether such things are true, we repeat them in our own way, probably greatly exaggerating them, and we feel no scruple about the matter since we only repeat what we have heard! Sometimes we cannot remember all the circumstances, and we quite innocently (?) replace them by others of our own invention! And to justify ourselves, we say: "I merely relate what others have told me; if it is not true, it is not my fault." The occasions for indulging in detraction are most frequent and easily found. Whenever a few persons are together, woe to the absent! Those present rival with one

another in interesting and eloquent descriptions of and declamations against the shortcomings of their absent friends or acquaintances. It is exceedingly difficult to avoid such occasions and to refrain from joining in the detraction. Usually what all the others are doing, we also do without scruple or remorse!

3. Here are some of the pretexts for detraction. "What I say is true! I am telling no lie! I can prove all I say!" But it is still more true that you are bound to love your neighbor as your own self, otherwise you shall have no hope of salvation!

"This matter is known to many, and cannot long remain a secret." Yes; but it does not devolve on you to become the instrument of its publication.

"He deserves it, for he is too proud, too overbearing." But his fault gives you no right to fail against the law of charity.

"Such persons should be put to shame, else they will never amend." But who has constituted you as their judge?

"I have no ill-feeling against him; nor do I intend to injure him. I say this only as a pastime." You have no right to amuse yourself at the expense of others.

"It is always right to tell the truth." Yes, but only when this is necessary, useful, or prudent, but not otherwise.

"Everybody else does it; even pious people indulge in it." An evil custom is sinful; moreover, not everything so-called pious people do is a virtue to be imitated.

But there is also another side to detraction. No one likes to be spoken ill of! How angry it makes them, when they hear of it! How persistently they demand reparation! How bitter they are against their detractors! Even misers would sacrifice large sums to suppress ill reports about them. People are fond of detraction when others are

its victims! But it is quite the contrary when they themselves are its victims!

II. In certain cases (given below) the shortcomings of our neighbor may be made known to certain persons. Every one highly esteems his good name. It is in accordance with the law of charity to defend our neighbor's good name as long as we can. It is uncharitable and unjust for us to cause him to lose his good name. The good name is the greatest of natural goods. The detractor robs him of this priceless good, hurts his feelings and deeply grieves him. If we really and sincerely loved him, we could not do so, for it would be directly contrary to our love for him. We have no right to injure his good name, and, if we do, it behooves us to repair the injury we do him thereby. The consequences of the loss of one's good name are beyond estimation, and are usually irreparable. Were we to endeavor to repair them, even at the expense of our own good name, certain injurious impressions in the minds of men will, most probably, never be obliterated; for instance, because of your detraction that young man will never be able to get a good situation, that young woman will never be able to contract a desirable marriage! Have you never committed a fault which you would not like to be publicly known? How would you like a certain detractor to make it known? Bear in mind that "charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely" (1 Cor. 13. 4). How many disputes and enmities are begotten by detraction?

"Remember," says the Holy Ghost, "the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the ignorance of thy neighbor. Refrain from strife, and thou shalt diminish thy sins. For a passionate man kindleth strife, and a sinful man will trouble his friends and bring in debate in the midst of them that are at peace. . . . A tongue that beareth witness bringeth death. If thou blow the spark, it shall burn as a fire; and if thou spit upon it, it shall be

quenched. The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed, for he hath troubled many that were at peace. The tongue of a third person hath disquieted many. The stroke of a whip maketh a blue mark; but a stroke of the tongue will break the bones. Many have fallen by the edge of the sword; but not so many as have perished by their own tongue" (Eccli. 28. 9–22).

A fault kept secret gives no scandal; but, if made known! If the secret matter related is very bad, or disgraceful, even when told only to one person, the detractor is guilty of a grievous sin. "But the matter would have become known later!" If you knew that some person intended burning your neighbor's house, would that give you the right to set it yourself on fire? Put yourself in your neighbor's place; how would you like your secret misdeeds to be made known to others!

The grievousness of the sin of detraction is measured by: the matter disclosed, the character of the person defamed, the character of the defamer, the defamer's intention, the defamer's manner of relating the matter, and the evil consequences of the detraction.

The detraction is not grievous, if uttered by a notorious gossip; if the defamed is a notoriously bad person; if the defamed has retaliated by detracting his defamer! N.B. It is our duty to make known the faults, or crimes, of others, when questioned by lawful authority, such as in a court of justice. We may, and ought even sometimes, to disclose the faults of others to those persons who are able to correct them, such as the faults of children to their parents. We are also allowed to reveal the crime or hidden defect of another when this is necessary to justify ourselves, to protect or justify an innocent party, and for any other lawful purpose, provided we say nothing more than is necessary.

ACTIVE CHARITY BY GOOD EXAMPLE

"So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5. 16).

We should practise the love of our neighbor not only in our thoughts and in our speech, but also in our deeds. We may not be able to give alms, on account of our great poverty, nor give help to our neighbor, on account of our infirmities; but we can all practise charity towards our neighbor by giving him a good example. Good example is a praiseworthy action which our neighbor can witness and which is fit to be imitated by him. Not all holy and praiseworthy actions are fit to be imitated, for there are some, like the rigorous austerities of some saints, which are more to be admired than imitated. Actions are more powerful and persuasive than words. It is far easier to speak beautifully about virtue than to practise it. For this reason he who practises virtue, makes a far deeper impression on the beholder than he who discourses beautifully on virtue. Many there are whose language is exquisitely beautiful, whilst their conduct belies what they say.

1. We should imitate our divine Saviour, for He is our Model. "Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1. 1). Before teaching men what they should do to be saved, Jesus Christ put into practice what He was to teach. He became man, not only to redeem us from sin and hell and teach us the way to heaven, but also to give us the example. Jesus chose a life of poverty; hence He could teach with effect: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 5. 3). He showed Himself humble, laborious, meek, charitable, affable, kind to the poor and to repentant sinners, patient and moderate,

avoiding all excess, zealous for souls. He traveled from place to place, enduring hardships and persecutions, seeking the lost sheep, preaching during the day and frequently spending the night in prayer. How kind and merciful He was towards sinners, such as Matthew, Zacheus, Magdalen, the adulteress and the good thief! He practised every virtue, so that after giving good example to all, He could require His followers also to give good example, saying: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Giving good example is the duty of every Christian. Wherefore all our actions should tend to edify our neighbor and glorify God, whilst our good intention should be interior and secret. "Do good," says St. Paul, "not only before God, but before all men" (Rom. 12. 17), "in your dress, in your speech and in your actions," says St. Bernard.

"Let every one of you," says St. Paul to the Romans (15. 2), "please his neighbor unto edification." The celebrated Cornelius à Lapide thus comments these words of St. Paul: "Lead an edifying life and, as it were, impel your neighbor, by the example of your charity, self-restraint and modesty, to practise every virtue." St. Paul admonishes us to give good example quietly and not ostentatiously, so as to "give offense to no one" (2 Cor. 6. 3).

2. The law of God is never so beautiful and attractive as when it is put into practice. "In the early Church when purity of morals reigned among the Christians," says Father Louis of Granada, "the charm of the beauty of the divine law was so great and so striking, that many pagans, although they hated and cruelly persecuted the Christians, could not refrain from openly admiring their virtue and holiness and acknowledging the sublimity of the religion which taught its members to lead so holy and so godlike a life." Worldlings according to St. Peter writing to the early Christians, "think it strange that you run not with

them into the same confusion of riotousness" (2 Pet. 4. 4). It was the good example of the Christians, one hundred years later, that induced Justin, the philosopher, to become a Christian and later on to suffer martyrdom. It was by her good example that St. Monica converted Patrick, her husband, a wicked and licentious pagan. Her son, Augustine, who had gone astray, lost the faith and become a Manichean, was finally converted by reading the examples of virtue given by the saints. Virtue had seemed to him so hard to practise, that he was deterred from all thoughts of conversion. But after reading of the virtues of the saints, he exclaimed: "What others can do, I also can do, if I only earnestly make up my mind to do it!" A daily experience brings us similar examples of sinners converted by the good examples they behold around them.

The first thing we should learn from the good examples given us by our neighbor is fidelity to *duty*. For instance, a man who is always full of charity in his speech, teaches us to observe the eighth commandment; a man who goes regularly to Mass on Sundays and Holydays of obligation, teaches us to keep the precept of hearing Mass on the days prescribed. In the next place, we should imitate only the good example that is conformable to our state of life, to the conditions in which we are placed. For instance, we shall do well to imitate the example of a man who assists daily at Mass, only in case the duties we owe to our family, to our employment, will not suffer therefrom. It would be wrong for a man who has hard and exhaustive labor to perform to imitate the fasts and other austerities of some religious order, such as, the Trappists. By performing well the duties of our state of life and faithfully keeping the commandments of God and of His Church, we can become, like St. John Baptist, "a shining light" (John 5. 35) to our neighbor. Let us, in all we do, bear in mind that, as St. Paul says, "we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men" (1 Cor. 4. 9). Woe to him

who gives bad example, who gives scandal, for he does the work of Satan and causes the damnation of many together with his own. "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh" (Mat. 18. 7). But blessed is the man who gives good example, for he will save not only his own soul, but will contribute very much to the salvation of those he edifies.

But why is example so powerful for either good or evil? Father Grou, S.J., gives us the reason. "Only few men act from principle, from a sense of duty, because few are solidly enlightened concerning what they should do, what they should avoid, and the motives and results of their actions. The majority of men are led or drawn by the examples of others. Many men have only a weak and irresolute character, and are unable by themselves to come to a decision, but follow the impulsion they receive from those with whom they associate, and take the same road which they see others take. There are also many who are light and fickle-minded, and devoid of constancy, and therefore they cannot take a right course or remain therein, unless they are supported by the firmness of thers who possess an influence over them. Finally, very many men can do nothing but imitate and do what they see others do. Such persons are good with the good, wicked among the wicked. This is why good example is so necessary, and evil example so contagious."

ZEAL FOR OUR NEIGHBOR'S SOUL

The commandment of the love of our neighbor imposes on us the obligation of assisting our neighbor, not only in his corporal wants, and in promoting his temporal welfare, but also of assisting him in his spiritual wants and promoting his eternal welfare. We should even do more to help him to save his soul than to help him in his corporal wants and in his temporal interests, because his salvation is of infinitely greater importance than his temporal prosperity.

The crucifix teaches us how greatly at heart we should have our neighbor's salvation. It teaches us that Jesus Christ suffered and died not only for us, but also for our neighbor. In the sight of God his soul is as precious as ours. We are all brethren in Christ, members of one and the same body of which He is the head. We should then, as such, take a deep interest in our neighbor's soul, or spiritual welfare. Whilst we are beholding around us so many souls rushing headlong to perdition, should we remain idle and indifferent, and perhaps contribute to their ruin by our bad example, by our scandals! The parents, especially, have a most sacred obligation to teach, train and help their children to save their immortal souls. For this purpose they are bound in conscience to impart to them a sound religious education both at home and in a good Catholic school; to watch over their conduct, to keep them from dangerous company, to correct them when necessary, and to give them in all things and at all times a good example. If they neglect any of these duties, they forfeit their own salvation. Superiors are likewise obliged to help their subordinates to save their souls. This duty requires them, when necessary, to instruct and admonish them, and always

to give them the opportunity of fulfilling their religious duties, and to give them a good example in all things.

The laity are able, in many ways, to contribute to their neighbor's salvation, especially to that of their relatives, friends, associates, etc. Those who have the gift of writing for the press, should beware of abusing that gift to the great injury of souls by advocating false principles, by immoral or suggestive descriptions, and the like. Such writers are agents of the devil and shall have to answer to God for the scandals they give and the irreparable harm they do to the souls of their neighbors! Their writings should, if not actually promote, at least not hinder the salvation of their readers. Those who are neither writers nor publishers, should, as far as they can, support the Catholic Press, and endeavor to spread good Catholic books, papers and periodicals. Those who are unable to do even this much, should endeavor by their holy conversation to lead men to the service of God.

Every one, without exception, has it in his power to promote his neighbor's salvation by frequent and fervent prayer. This kind of prayer is very efficacious. The majority of the sinners who are converted during Lent, during missions and other exercises, are converted rather through the prayers of humble and obscure individuals than by the zeal and eloquence of the missionaries. A few centuries ago there lived an eloquent Jesuit Father, who spent nearly his whole life in giving missions. Whenever he was engaged in stirring up the hearts and consciences of his hearers by his powerful sermons, his companion, a pious, simple and humble lay-brother, would be engaged in reciting the rosary for the success of the Father's preaching. One day especially the Father's sermon caused his vast audience to melt into tears and utter loud sobs, and to cry out aloud to God for mercy. The Jesuit Father was so enraptured by his success, that he began to yield to feelings of pride at his own ability and success. He was, however,

very soon humbled, for an angel appeared to him and told him he had no reason to feel proud of his achievement, for the whole success of his sermon was the result of God's grace obtained by the fervent prayers of his companion, the pious and humble lay-brother. This example should serve as an inducement to us all to pray for the conversion of sinners, and, in fact, for the spiritual and temporal wants of our neighbor, and more especially for the salvation of those souls, who are the most abandoned.

Furthermore, every one, without exception, can contribute very much, by his good example, to the salvation of his fellow-men. The good example of a layman is more effective than any sermon. Many people never hear a sermon, never read a good book or a Catholic paper. Many others, after hearing a good, practical sermon, lack the courage to put it into practice, alleging that it is easy to preach, that any one can do so, but that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for those who are living in the world and have to work hard to earn a living and are thrown into all kinds of company, to practise what is preached.

But a layman's good example is a visible, living sermon; it can be seen by all. It is a continual sermon, for it lasts for days, months and years. It is a sermon that is clearer, more eloquent, more convincing and persuasive than the finest oratory, for it proves that all who earnestly wish, can put into practice what is preached in the pulpit, that is, that all can, if they but firmly will it, save their souls. This will appear evident to you in a few moments.

Young men pretend that a young man cannot refrain from associating with evil companions, from staying out late at night, from frequenting places of dangerous amusements, from indulging in cursing, obscene jokes and conversations; and, amid so many temptations and with strong passions, he cannot possibly lead a pure life and frequent the sacraments. But look at that young man, who is a practical

Catholic, who is never seen in bad or dangerous company or amusements, but is always to be found only at home, in his place of work or business, in church or in good company; his lips are never defiled by cursing or obscene conversation, his ears are closed against whatever is opposed to holy purity; he observes modesty of the eyes, shuns all dangerous reading, and his life is as pure as an angel's, for he goes often to confession and partakes weekly at least of the "Bread of Angels." His edifying conduct demonstrates the fallacy of the pretexts alleged in excuse of a disorderly and licentious life, and impels other young men to say inwardly: "That young man has the same nature, the same passions and temptations as myself; he finds the same difficulties as I in the practice of virture, and yet he leads a pure and chaste life; he has a good position and is successful therein, why should I not do as he does with the assistance of divine grace?"

Young women pretend that pleasure is to be found only in following the fashions, however ridiculous or wanting in Christian propriety and modesty; in reading love novels, however unbecoming or suggestive they may be, in frequenting fashionable places of amusement, however improper and dangerous to the morals; in private company keeping. They pretend that without all these life would become insupportable. But when they behold the bright and ever-smiling countenance of that young woman, who is fond of work and eschews all dangerous reading, all unbecoming fashions and amusements,— who never remains alone or goes out alone at night with a young man, whose soul is purer than her spotless dress; do they not clearly perceive in her good example a complete demonstration that there is more real pleasure and genuine happiness in shunning all danger and sin than in all the pleasures and enjoyments of worldlings?

Married women who flee the joys and crosses of maternity to indulge their love of pleasure, their passions; who

will not exercise a little patience and bear the self-chosen crosses of married life, but flee to divorce and re-marriage as a palliation of their troubles and a means of getting rid of proper restraint, will learn a lesson from the example of some poor married women with large families, who are beset with crosses and trials, and who are, nevertheless, happy and contented, because they live as good Catholic wives and mothers, and have the blessing of God on themselves and their families, because they faithfully keep the commandments of God and of His Church; their example shows them clearly that they could, if they would, do likewise and live happy in their trials.

In the next place, so many of our hard-working men, of our merchants and other business men, of our officials, pretend they have no time to practise their religion and receive the sacraments, that they need stimulants to keep up their strength and their health, that they cannot afford to contribute to the support of their parish or in charity, nor afford to take a Catholic paper or periodical. But when they behold other hard-working men, merchants and other business men, other officials, who have large families to support, but who, nevertheless find time to hear Mass not only on Sundays, but also on week-days, who frequent the sacraments, who never taste a drop of liquor, and who, even in their poverty, afford to contribute to the Church and in charity, who subscribe to and read Catholic publications, who, in a word, are practical and exemplary Catholics, then all their excuses vanish like a bit of vapor, and they are constrained to admit that they also, with God's help and with their own good will, can do likewise.

In like manner, we may go through every class and condition in life, and we shall discover and be convinced that there can be no sermon more persuasive and efficacious than the good example of a truly Catholic layman. St. Augustine had for years resisted all the arguments and exhortations of his holy mother and friends, all sermons

and good books, under the pretext that a pure and chaste life was an utter impossibility for him. But on reading the "Lives of the Saints" and beholding the good example of pious laymen, he exclaimed: "These men are made of flesh and blood as well as myself; they have the same passions as myself; they are beset with similar and even greater temptations than myself, and yet they lead a pure and chaste life! Why should not I also, with God's grace, be able to do the same, if I try earnestly?" This reflection effected more than all the sermons and arguments he had heard, and brought about the thorough conversion of him who became one of the greatest Fathers and Doctors of the Church. The same good example of practical Catholic laymen and the same correct reasoning thereon still produce and will always produce similar results among sinners. Let us, therefore, join to prayer and our other efforts the benefit of our good example and we shall greatly contribute to our neighbor's salvation. This is a duty on our part imposed on us by our divine Saviour in behalf of our neighbor, for He says expressly to us all, to laymen as well as to the clergy: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5. 16). In this manner our good example will promote the salvation of our neighbor and *secure our own.*

SCANDAL

"Woe to the man by whom the scandal cometh" (Mat. 18. 7).

This is a terrible anathema pronounced by Jesus Christ against those who give scandal. St. John Chrysostom says that it cannot be too often repeated or too greatly feared. Nothing else on earth causes greater injury or deserves greater punishments. Scandal brings religion and piety into disrepute, overthrows the laws of God, prevents the faithful from performing their sacred obligations, leads to every moral disorder, encourages and spreads vice, and daily damns many Christians. It is, to a great extent, the source of all the wickedness in the world. It is an enormous, horrible and diabolical sin. But what is especially deplorable, is that scandals cannot be done away with, for, says our divine Saviour, "scandals must come" (Mat. 18. 7). The world is so corrupt, and God, in His Providence, does not perform miracles to draw it out of its corruption, but respects the free-will of men. Hence as everywhere are found men who abuse their liberty and commit sin, not only in private, but also in the presence of others, scandals are, consequently, met with everywhere. "But woe to that man by whom scandal cometh," for he is the instrument, the agent of the devil in endeavoring to bring about the rule of vice. He is God's inveterate enemy, for he strives to ruin the souls redeemed by the Son of God. The scandal-giver deserves Christ's terrible anathema, first, because he executes the wicked designs of the devil, and secondly, because he overthrows, nullifies the designs of God.

I. The Scandal-giver Executes the Designs of the Devil.

What is scandal? Although scandal is so widespread and

common, it is not a special or particular sin, like cursing, stealing or telling lies. But any outward sin may be a scandal, when, like a dangerous and fatal contagion, it spreads around and leads others to commit the same sin. St. Thomas says that any sinful act, or even a sinful word or saying, may become a scandal if, owing to the neighbor's ignorance or weakness, it excites him to commit the same sin, either by facilitating its commission or by the mere power of bad example it emboldens him to do the same. Scandal is a circumstance which may aggravate any outward sin. An external sin becomes a scandal either when committed in another's presence or when it comes to his knowledge, and, at the same time, is apt to induce him to commit the same sin or a similar sin. A scandal is like a stone placed in a man's way to make him stumble and fall. It is "a stone of stumbling, a rock of scandal" (1 Pet. 2. 8).

St. Bernard calls the scandal-giver "the devil's agent, or substitute." The devil is not always able himself to tempt men; hence he makes use of men to seduce or corrupt those he cannot himself reach or influence, says St. Leo. If those who labor for the salvation of men deserve to be called "men of God," may we not correctly designate as "devil's agents" all those who work to ruin the souls of men? St. Bernard maintains that a scandalous person is often far more dangerous than all the devils combined. Were the devil himself to tempt us, we would be greatly shocked; but how can we mistrust a scandal-giver who is our friend, our relative, whose example so forcibly draws us into sin? If there were only devils to tempt men, sin would not be everywhere so powerful, so prevalent. But the scandal-giver, not being mistrusted or even suspected, lends to the devil his body, his eyes, his tongue, his other senses and members, so that the devil may use them to drag souls more easily and surely into sin. The scandal-giver, therefore, is truly and indeed the devil's agent, for 1,

he teaches sin, 2, he authorizes sin, 3, he spreads sin and 4, he perpetuates sin. If Jesus Christ called the Jews children of the devil for doing the devil's will, the scandal-giver deserves still more the same name, for

1, He teaches sin by his bad example. Tertullian says that scandal, or bad example, is a most powerful training in vice, because, as St. Cyprian declares, we easily learn to commit sin by seeing others committing it. Bad example, or scandal, naturally incites, encourages and draws the beholders to do the same. Jeroboam, king of the ten revolted tribes of Israel, brought about their apostasy and their fall into idolatry, by setting up in public golden calves and offering them divine worship. St. Augustine had received a good and pious education from his mother; but the bad example of his fellow-students drew him into a dissolute life and into an absurd heresy. "O friendship," he exclaimed after his conversion, "more cruel than a bitter and inveterate enmity, for it seduces and corrupts by its powerful and almost irresistible enticements to sin!" The young, the innocent, the inexperienced are usually the victims of bad example, of scandal! In fact, how many innocent souls are daily seduced, led astray and corrupted by scandal, by the bad example of their elders! How many young men and young women would still be innocent, pious, modest and pure, but are now unbelievers, apostates, profligates, criminals, the dregs of society! Had it not been for you, the agents of the devil, by your bad examples, your scandals, which taught them sin and induced them to enter the broad road that leads to perdition, they would still be pure, innocent, pious and virtuous!

2. The scandal-giver authorizes sin. Satan's most dangerous artifice in ancient times to pervert mankind was to cause men to adore the different vices under the names of gods, or deities. St. Augustine represents a young libertine authorizing his shameful lusts by the example of Jupiter, the chief of the pagan gods. Instead of referring to the

vices of those ancient false deities, the devil now alleges, as authorizing sin, the bad example or scandal of other men, for sin publicly committed becomes the custom, the fashion of the day, enjoys impunity, especially when the scandal-givers are numerous and hold a position in society, so that even the most timid are encouraged to sin without remorse! The parents and influential and prominent persons serve as the rule and guide for the children, for others less prominent and influential, and become responsible for the sins of those who imitate them. When the moon or a star is eclipsed, it does not attract much attention. Not so, however, when there is an eclipse of the sun! (Apply this to the pious, to the influential, to the leaders in society, etc., concerning immodest fashions in dress, balls, theaters, amusements, slander, the reading of sensational and erotic literature and newspapers, divorces, scandalous marriages, dishonest business practices, etc.)

3. The scandal-giver spreads sin. Nothing is more contagious than scandal. Good example is powerful, but by far not so powerful as bad example, or scandal, because, since the fall of our first parents, men are prone to evil, and bad example so greatly increases their inclination to evil, that usually they require but little or no effort to do evil; whilst in order to follow good example, they have first to overcome their natural inclination to evil and then make the necessary efforts to follow good example. Experience shows that one wicked person often suffices to corrupt all the individuals in a school, in a community, in a whole town. Mathathias, the father of the Machabees, the renowned Jewish patriots, persuaded of this truth, and inspired by a holy zeal, killed a Jew who was giving public scandal, as we read in Holy Scripture: "There came a Jew in the sight of all to sacrifice to the idols. . . . And Mathathias saw and was grieved, and running upon him, he slew him on the altar" (1 Mach. 2. 23, 24). Why did he do this? Lest the scandal the apostate was giving should

entice others to do likewise, and end in causing the apostasy of all the hitherto faithful Jews.

Scandal is a bad, poisonous leaven that corrupts the whole mass; it is a leprosy, a cancer, a poison that gradually infects the whole body and causes death. One wicked man, Arius in the fourth century, sufficed to corrupt the faith of hundreds of thousands of Christians, and to threaten the very existence of the Church of Jesus Christ! Vigilantius by his corrupt doctrine caused thousands of women to forfeit their modesty and chastity. Call to mind the fearful evil effects of the preaching and writings of Luther, Calvin and other so-called Reformers, the millions they led astray, the terrible civil wars and persecutions, the martyrdom of thousands, the destruction of thousands of convents and churches, the horrible profanation of Sacred Hosts, numberless priests and religious massacred! Think of the evils produced by immodest fashions and customs, plays, amusements, novels, the infidel and erotic press, which cause the loss of millions of souls for whom the Son of God suffered and died! Wherefore we should not wonder at the act of Mathathias. It is the duty of every true disciple of Jesus Christ to do all in his power, especially by his good example, to put a stop to all these scandals. An ancient proverb says that "every man should consider himself a soldier against traitors;" that is, it is every man's right and duty to use every lawful means to oppose and crush scandal.

4. The scandal-giver helps to perpetuate sin until the end of the world. To prove this I appeal to your own experience. You have, for instance, learned telling lies, cursing, etc., from the bad example or scandal given you. Then by committing the same sins in presence of others, you taught these to commit the same sins; and those you taught, have taught, or will teach others also, and so it will go on from year to year, from generation to generation, as long as the world will last. Parents give scandal to their children,

and the children imitate their parents. You will die sooner or later, but the sin you taught does not die, but will continue to exist, like a never-dying worm. Woe to thee, torrent of human custom, who can, who will resist thee? The present generation? No. The next generation? No. Scandal is like a fire, which ceases or goes out, only when everything within its reach has been consumed! Like a torrent or a hurricane, it stops only after carrying away, after destroying everything in its path! Scandal will live until the end of the world, when "the Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire" (Mat. 13. 41, 42). Have you ever reflected that your evil example would have such terrible results, and that you are, to some extent, responsible for them?

Sin is personal! True! But the scandal-giver not only sins himself, but causes others also to sin; he, therefore, deserves two-fold punishment. If the sinner deserves punishment for his own sin, how much more deserving is he to be punished who excites others to sin, teaches and encourages them to sin, furnishes them with the means and occasions of sinning, and spreads and perpetuates sin! Cease then to give scandal. "Let all *your* [own] wicked doings suffice you" (Ez. 44. 6). If you do not wish to be saved, lose your own soul, but do not cause others to lose theirs! Be not a devil's agent to make your fellow-men his victims. That the devils should seduce men, is not astonishing; but that Christians should do so, is an abomination!

II. The Scandal-giver Overthrows the Designs of Jesus Christ.

Mean and cowardly and perfidious is the Christian who is ashamed of Jesus Christ. But what shall we say of the Christian who not only rebels against Jesus Christ, but even directly opposes His designs and endeavors to frustrate them?

Jesus Christ came on earth to destroy the empire of Satan. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12. 31). But the scandal-giver seeks to spread Satan's reign. Christ came to banish sin out of the world: "This is all the fruit that sin should be taken away" (Is. 27. 9). But the scandal-giver teaches sin, spreads sin, perpetuates sin. Christ says: "I am come, not to destroy, but to fulfil the law" (Mat. 5. 17). But the scandal-giver rebels against the law of God, and entices others to do likewise. Christ came to give men the example of humility, detachment, chastity, modesty, meekness: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. 11. 29). The scandal-giver, by his evil example, teaches every kind of vice. Jesus says: "I came that they might have life" (John 10. 10). The scandal-giver robs the souls of men of the life of grace. Jesus died to reconcile men with God: "We have been reconciled with God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5. 10). The scandal-giver exerts himself to cause his fellow-men to forfeit God's friendship. "The Son of man came to seek and save what had perished" (Luke 19. 10). The scandal-giver seeks to destroy what Jesus came to save. Jesus Christ lived, suffered and died "for us men and for our salvation" (Nicene Creed). But the scandal-giver seems to live and labor only for the perdition of his fellow-men. Of him we may say: "This is antichrist" (1 John 4. 3). He is worse than the Jews, than Pilate; for they, while putting the Saviour to death, co-operated, in some manner, with man's salvation. But the scandal-giver seeks to nullify the sufferings and death of Christ and to cause man's damnation. His crime is, in some manner, greater than theirs, for, if Jesus Christ shed His blood for the redemption of souls, if their salvation was dearer to Him than His own life, he who causes the ruin of these souls, commits a greater crime than the executioners of our Saviour. Therefore, when you give bad example or scandal, you offend and outrage Jesus Himself,

you persecute the Church and her members. Hence you are worse than even Nero and Diocletian; they sent martyrs to heaven, but you send souls to hell! You sinners, cast your own selves into hell, if you choose to do so, "but save [spare] his life [the soul of your neighbor]" (Job. 2. 6). Cease, then, giving scandal! "And through thy knowledge [evil example] shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ hath died" (1 Cor. 8. 11). "Woe to that man, through whom scandal cometh" (Mat. 18. 7).

Objections of the scandal-giver. 1, "It is not my intention to pervert my neighbor, to cause him to lose his soul." True, you do not directly intend this; but your conduct has this effect. But our own reason tells us: "He that wills the cause, wills also its effect." What would you do, if a man were to aim a loaded gun at your best friend and pull the trigger and kill him, and then allege in extenuation of his deed: "I did not mean to kill him"? A Christian is obliged to avoid giving scandal. Listen to St. Paul: "If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh" (1 Cor. 8. 13). Are you more privileged than St. Paul?

2. "If my neighbor is led astray by my example, it is his own fault, his own weakness." True; scandal is not dangerous for those who have a strong will, who possess solid virtue. But to whom is it dangerous? To the young, to the weak, to the inexperienced. But does not our divine Saviour, the infallible Truth, say: "Whoever shall scandalize one of these little ones, . . . it were better that a mill-stone should be hung about his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea"? (Mat. 18. 6).

The scandal-giver ruins God's work, frustrates the designs of Jesus Christ; he is, then, an antichrist! And the world is full of such antichrists. "Now there are many antichrists" (1 John 2. 18). (Enumerate various sinners whose evil examples induce others to commit sin, such as parents, etc.) To all these Jesus Christ addresses these

terrible words: "I did not consider it too much to redeem these souls at the price of My blood, of My very life; for them I suffered insults, torments and a cruel and shameful death; I thereby gained heaven for them all. But you, wicked agents of Satan, you make them the victims of your scandals; you annihilate in them the fruits of My passion and death, you consign those souls to eternal torments. Behold those innocent children, those weak and inexperienced souls you have scandalized, led astray, perverted and corrupted! Those innocent Abels you have ruined!" "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me" (Gen. 4. 10). "I will require his [their] blood at thy hands" (Ez. 3. 18). Your damnation is unavoidable, unless you sincerely repent, cease giving scandal, and repair the past as far as lies in your power. How many are now perhaps in hell because of your scandals, your evil example! (Act of contrition, combined with a firm hope in God's mercy, and the resolution to amend and repair the evil done.)

III. SERIES OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

THE REAL PRESENCE

The Catholic faith teaches concerning the Blessed Eucharist, that, by the words of consecration pronounced by the priest during Mass over the bread and wine, the substance of the bread is changed into the true living body of Jesus Christ, and the substance of the wine into the true living blood of Jesus Christ, whilst their accidents, that is, the outward appearances of the bread and wine, remain unchanged. Under the species or appearances of the bread is the living body of Christ, that is, His body united with His blood, His soul and His divinity. Under the species or appearances of the wine is the living blood of Christ, that is, His blood united with His body, His soul and His divinity. Moreover, Jesus Christ is present, whole and entire, under the least particle or drop of the species, for though the species may be divided, Jesus is not and cannot be divided. (It is just like the substance of bread, which is just as really present in each piece of bread, however small, as in a whole loaf.) The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist is evident from

I. The Words of the Promise.

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6). Jesus Christ gave up His real body to torments and death for the spiritual life, or salvation of the world, and therefore indicated clearly that the bread He would give was His real body under the appearances of bread. That this is the true meaning of His words is evident, for, on hearing these words, "the Jews strove among themselves: How can this man give us His flesh

to eat?" Had those Jews misunderstood Jesus, He would have been obliged to show that they were mistaken. But, far from doing this, He confirmed more and more the meaning they attributed to His words. "Then Jesus saith to them: Amen, amen I say to you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life; . . . for My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him." If the Blessed Eucharist were not the real living body and blood of our divine Saviour, its reception could not cause us to abide in Jesus Christ, and cause Him to abide in us; because for such an abiding a real union is necessary. Consequently, the words of Jesus Christ clearly mean that He is really present in the Blessed Eucharist, or rather that the Blessed Eucharist is Jesus Christ in Person as man and God. This is evident also from the remainder of His discourse. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so that he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. He that eateth this bread shall live forever." Jesus Christ could not have spoken thus, had He not intended to give His real body and blood to be the food and drink of His followers. His words are so clear as to admit of no other meaning or interpretation. To deny this would be to charge the Son of God with wilful deception. Such an assertion is highly blasphemous! "Many of His disciples hearing it, said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it? But Jesus, knowing that His disciples murmured at this, said to them: Doth this scandalize you? . . . It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." The true meaning of these last words, which Jesus said in order to correct the false impression of the Jews who imagined that Jesus Christ said that they should eat His flesh as they ate the flesh of animals, is that His real body and

blood were not destined to be corporal food, but spiritual food, the food of the soul, and were not to be partaken of materially as are the flesh and blood of animals. The effects Jesus Christ attributes to the Eucharist, that is, to live forever, to abide in Him and to have Him abiding in them, can proceed only from His real living flesh and blood. The aforesaid promise of giving His flesh and blood as "meat indeed, and drink indeed," was actually kept a year later, as we shall now see.

II. The Words of the Institution.

Our divine Saviour instituted the Blessed Eucharist on the eve of His death, after He had eaten His last Pasch with His apostles. It was then that Jesus, fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament, made the New Covenant which was to last until the end of the world; it was the New Law for His Church. He was then about to bequeath to His Church the means of saving mankind, of applying to them the fruits of His passion and death. He then made His last will. For the last time before His death He was speaking to His bosom friends, "to whom it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God;" to them He spoke in the plainest terms, "without parables." He was then instructing His successors and "representatives," who were "to teach all nations." Therefore He must have spoken clearly, simply, plainly, intelligibly, literally, without obscurity, without figures. "Whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye and eat; this is My body; and taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins" (Mat. 26. 26–28). St. Mark relates the institution of the Eucharist in the same manner. St. Luke has: "This is My body which is given for you" (22. 19); as if He said: "This is no longer bread, but My very

body which is to be sacrificed on the cross for you." The Real Presence could not be expressed more clearly, more appropriately, more correctly. And surely our divine Saviour would not have taken all that trouble or used such expressions to give His apostles merely a piece of bread and a little wine, unless He intended to deceive them! But such a supposition is blasphemous! And the evangelists would not have related the Institution of the Eucharist so minutely, if it were only bread and wine. Moreover, Jesus Christ had, as He said, long "ardently desired to eat this Pasch with them;" and He had daily eaten bread with them! Why had He so ardently desired to eat this Pasch with them? Because, as His death was drawing near, He longed to give them the greatest testimony of His love and His most precious gift. Could that testimony, that most precious gift be merely a piece of bread, a little wine? Was that the fulfilment of His great promise, on which depended the spiritual life, the eternal salvation of His disciples? Let us, therefore, examine

III. How St. Paul Understood It. "The chalice of benediction which we bless," he says, "is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. 10. 16). The chalice of benediction, according to St. Paul, really contained the blood of Jesus Christ, otherwise it could not be the communion, "the receiving or drinking of His blood." And the "eating of the bread we break" could not be the "partaking of or the eating of the Lord's body," unless it were actually His real body under the species or appearances of bread. Furthermore, St. Paul expressly declares that this doctrine had been specially revealed to him by Jesus Christ Himself: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat; this is My body, which shall be

delivered for you; this do for a commemoration of Me. In like manner, also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in My blood; this do ye, as often as ye shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For, as often as you shall eat this bread, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. 11. 23–26). These words of St. Paul unquestionably prove that the Eucharist is not mere bread, nor mere wine, but the very living body and blood of Jesus Christ, which He offered on the cross for the salvation of mankind, and that its reception is the application of the merits of His passion and death to their souls.

From all this St. Paul concludes: "Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself and eat of that bread and drink of the chalice; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (Ibid. 27–29). These terrible words of St. Paul clearly prove that the Eucharist is really the body and blood of Jesus Christ. If the Eucharist were merely a little bread and wine, there could not be a great crime in receiving them in the state of sin, nor could such a one be guilty of profaning the body and blood of Christ, if His body and blood were not really present. Neither could such reception in the state of sin be eating and drinking one's judgment, or condemnation. But, in fact, the unworthy reception of the Eucharist is a terrible crime deserving of eternal condemnation, because the unworthy recipient discerns not therein the body and blood of the Lord from ordinary bread and wine. Wherefore since the unworthy reception of the Eucharist is a profanation of the Lord's body and blood, His body and blood must be really present in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine.

IV. The Real Presence Proved by Tradition. All

the Liturgies of the Church, even the most ancient that can be traced back to the apostolic age, mention the Eucharist as being the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, which is sacrificed in the Mass and given to the faithful in holy Communion. The early Christians so highly revered and honored the Blessed Eucharist, that the catechumens (the unbaptized preparing for baptism) and the penitents (those undergoing public penance) were excluded from even witnessing the ceremonies of the Offertory and the subsequent parts of the Mass. Before the administration of holy Communion, the deacon, turning to the faithful, said: "Let those who are not prepared, recede and make room for those who are, and let those who are prepared approach with faith, with awe, with love." Here are some testimonies of the early Fathers concerning the faith of the early Church in the Real Presence.

1. St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, martyr. On his way to Rome to suffer martyrdom in the beginning of the second century, he wrote to the Romans: "I desire no perishable food; I desire the divine Bread, the Bread from heaven, the Bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I desire His blood, the heavenly drink."

2. St. Justin, martyr (in the middle of the second century), says in his *Apologia* (1. 66.) for the Christians: "This food we call the Eucharist. We do not eat it as ordinary bread, nor drink it as an ordinary beverage; but just as the Saviour assumed flesh and blood for our salvation, we profess that this food, over which the words of Christ have been pronounced, and with which our blood and flesh are nourished, has become the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ incarnate."

3. St. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, martyred in the beginning of the third century, wrote: "We offer to God the bread we have blessed and the chalice we have blessed, and invoke the Holy Ghost, that He may cause this offering of bread to become the body of Christ, and this wine to be-

come His blood, so that he who receives these gifts, may obtain the remission of sins and life everlasting."

4. In the beginning of the third century Tertullian wrote: "Christ, having taken bread and distributing it to His disciples, made it His body by saying: 'This is My body.'" In another work he wrote: "Our flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ, so that our soul may thrive on God Himself."

5. Origen, the renowned instructor in religion in the first half of the third century, writes: "When you eat this sacred, incorruptible food, when you receive the Bread and Cup of life, you eat and drink the body and blood of the Lord, and the Lord enters under your roof. Humble yourself then, like the centurion, and say with him: 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come into my house.'"

6. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the celebrated Catechist in the middle of the fourth century, writes: "Since Jesus Christ Himself declared and said, 'This is My body,' who will venture to doubt it? And since He said, 'This is My blood,' who will be so bold as to assert that it is not His blood? Christ once changed water into wine, and is He not worthy of credit, when He says that He has changed wine into His blod? With a certainty excluding all manner of doubt, we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, for under the appearances of bread His body is given, and we receive His blood under the appearances of wine."

7. St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the latter part of the fourth century, writes: "This food which thou receivest, this living Bread that comes down from heaven, supplies us with the substance of eternal life; and whosoever eats this living Bread, shall never die, for it is the body of Christ. Consider which is the more excellent, manna, the bread of angels, or Christ's flesh, which is, in truth, the Bread of life. Manna came down from heaven; this Bread

is above heaven. Manna was from heaven, but this Bread is the flesh of the Lord of heaven."

8. St. John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, in the beginning of the fifth century, writes: "Let us believe God and not contradict Him, although what He says may appear contrary to our reason and sight; for His words should be more convincing and persuasive than our reason and sight. His Word cannot be deceived, but our senses are liable to deception. Therefore, since the Divine Word says, 'This is My body,' let us be persuaded and believe, considering it with the eyes of our understanding. Lo! what a banquet thou enjoyest! What the angels look upon with awe and venture not, without dread, to gaze upon steadfastly on account of the brightness emanating therefrom, with that we are nourished and commingled, and have become one body and one flesh with Christ!"

Can anything prove more clearly the Real Presence than these extracts?

(Conclude by a brief recapitulation of the principal points.)

EXCELLENCE OF THE EUCHARIST

"He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord; He hath given food to them that fear Him" (Ps. 110. 4, 5).

The Blessed Eucharist is the summary of all the wonders wrought by God. It surpasses all the works of the creation, for under the appearances of bread and wine Jesus Christ is really present as God and man. It surpasses the work of the Redemption, for it is not only a sacrifice equal to that of the cross, since it is its repetition, continuation, perpetuation and application, but it is also the food of our souls and Jesus Christ thereby becomes our Physician, our Lord, our Friend, our Spouse. It is, as it were, the remembrance of all that God has done for us.

I. Nothing Is More Excellent Than the Eucharist.

The excellence of a gift depends, first, on the dignity of the giver. In the Eucharist Jesus Christ Himself is the Giver. How greatly, then, should we appreciate even the least gift from such a Giver! Secondly, on the gift itself. The Eucharist is so great a gift, that none greater, none even so great can be found, for it is Jesus Christ Himself; and although He is almighty, He cannot bestow a gift greater than Himself! Thirdly, on the affection that prompts the gift. Our divine Saviour Himself says: "Greater love than this no man hath, than that he lay down his life for His friends" (John 15. 13). But Jesus Christ has not only shown the greatest love for us, who were His enemies, by dying the most ignominious death on the cross, but He has loved us so tenderly, that He died, in order to be able to give us His own flesh and blood as the food of

our souls, in order to be most intimately and inseparably united with us, for there is no union more close and inseparable than that of the food we take with our body. Fourthly, on its wonderful effects. The intimate union of our soul with Jesus Christ in holy Communion renders us, as St. Peter (I. 1. 4) expresses it, "partakers of the divine nature." We are thereby enlightened in the mysteries of our holy religion, as were the two disciples going to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection; it bestows on us heavenly joys; it purifies us of the stains of human weakness and frailty; it arms and strengthens us to combat our passions and renders us generous in the service of God, as the example of the early Christians and the martyrs proves; it strengthens us in the practice of virtue, and secures to us eternal life.

II. Why Do We Derive so Little Benefit From the Blessed Eucharist?

St. Thomas tells us in his grand hymn *Lauda Sion* which the Church has inserted after the Epistle in the Mass of Corpus Christi: "It is death to the wicked, and life to the good."

1. Some derive but little profit from holy Communion, because they make only a careless preparation. If they were honored with a visit in their house of some great personage, how carefully they would cleanse their home and try to make it look clean and bright in order to honor so great a visitor? How many of us make only a careless and hurried confession, and recite a few prayers without earnestness or fervor, as a preparation for holy Communion! There are some who are unable to keep their thoughts collected in prayer for a few moments, and yet do not even use a prayer-book to help them to make a proper preparation, or if they use one, they make no effort even to make its prayers come from their heart, for they read them only mechanically. Such persons have really no

desire, no love for Jesus in the sacrament of His love.

2. There are others who when they receive holy Communion, do not give a hearty welcome to Jesus Christ, for they lack a strong ardent faith in His Real Presence!

3. Many after receiving holy Communion make hardly any thanksgiving, because of their want of appreciation of the Blessed Eucharist.

4. The reason why others derive but little benefit from holy Communion, is because they receive it but seldom. Our divine Saviour promised life everlasting to those who frequently eat of this Bread of life: "He that eateth this bread shall live forever" (John 6). Mark the present tense, "eateth," which signifies a habit, a state, and, therefore, denotes frequency. The Blessed Eucharist is the food of the soul, and as the body must eat often in order to keep up its health, strength and life, so also the soul, in order to keep up its spiritual life, that is, to remain and make progress in the state of grace, in other words, "to possess eternal life," needs frequently to eat its spiritual food, which is the body of Christ in holy Communion. Frequent and even daily Communion is the wish of Jesus Christ and of His Church for all those who can possibly receive it daily. Our late Pope Pius X approved a decree of the Congregation of the Council concerning this matter on December 20, 1905, in which we read the following words: "1. Frequent and daily Communion, being most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be accessible to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life, so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with an upright and devout intention, can be lawfully hindered therefrom. 2. A right intention is had by him who goes to Holy Communion, not out of routine or vain-glory, or human respect, but in order to please God or to be more closely united to Him by charity and to make use of this divine remedy to oppose to his weaknesses and defects.

3. Although it is far more expedient that those who frequently or daily receive holy Communion should be free from venial sins, especially from those that are fully deliberate, and also from affection to such sins, nevertheless, it suffices that they be free from mortal sin and be resolved never more to commit mortal sin; if they are thus sincerely resolved, daily communicants cannot but gradually get rid of their venial sins and of all affection for the same. 4. The communicants should be careful to make a serious preparation for holy Communion, and, after holy Communion a suitable thanksgiving according to each one's strength, circumstances and duties. 5. Each one should ask his confessor's advice concerning frequent and daily Communion."

Our own interest demands that we receive holy Communion frequently, for our soul requires food as much and as frequently as our body, and holy Communion should be "our daily bread," as St. Augustine and other holy Fathers teach; and we need divine strength to conquer our strong passions and temptations, for we are very weak and frail.

Some pretend that they are "not worthy" to receive holy Communion often. True, but staying from Communion, or receiving but seldom, does not make them more worthy, but the contrary. Such objections proceed from indifference, carelessness and sloth concerning all that regards salvation. Such persons shun the exertion and labor necessary for saving their immortal souls.

"He that loves Jesus Christ much," says St. Augustine, "eats often of this Bread of life; and he that eats often of it, loves Jesus Christ daily more and more."

Conclusion.— Gratitude, love, ardent desire! Go often to visit Jesus Christ in the sacrament of His love, for He will load you with His graces and blessings! Receive Him often, even daily if possible, and you shall possess eternal life!

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

"From the rising of the sun to the going down My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is a sacrifice and there is offered to My name a clean oblation" (Mal. I. 11).

The Blessed Eucharist is not only a sacrament, but is also *the Sacrifice of the New Law.* It is the unbloody, the uninterrupted continuation and application of the Sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered of Himself on the cross for the salvation of mankind, whereby He effected man's redemption. It is a sacrament only in consequence of its being a sacrifice. The Blessed Eucharist could not be consumed in holy Communion, were it not first offered up in sacrifice. As a sacrifice it was foretold by the prophet Malachy. (Quote the text of the sermon.)

I. Sacrifice in General.

1. Sacrifice is the highest and most excellent act of adoration of the Deity and pertains essentially to religious worship. It is due to God alone; to offer it to a creature is idolatry. With the exception of adoration and the offering of sacrifice, every other exterior act of religion or worship, such as kneeling, praying to or invoking, may, without idolatry, be directed to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. Sacrifice consists in offering to God a visible object, in order to acknowledge, by its destruction, His supreme dominion over us and all things.

2. The custom of offering sacrifice to God dates from the origin of the human race. Adam, Cain, Abel, Henoch, Noe and the other patriarchs offered sacrifices to God. The same custom prevailed among all the ancient pagan nations. The Law of Moses prescribed to the Jews certain daily and other special sacrifices. There is nothing more

ancient or more universal than this custom of offering sacrifice to the Deity. Consequently, the idea and practice of offering sacrifice could originate only with God Himself; no one else could have introduced it or made it universal. The only exceptions to its universality are to be found in Protestantism and Mohammedanism.

3. The object of sacrifice is to offer to God adoration, thanksgiving for His benefits, to propitiate His justice for our sins, and to obtain all that we need for body and soul. These are debts of mankind to our Creator and Sovereign Lord. Instead of requiring man to sacrifice himself in atonement for his sins, for which he deserves death ("Thou shalt die" Gen. 2. 17), God accepted the blood of animals as a substitute. But how inadequate was this substitute to fulfil the four-fold object of sacrifice! God, being infinitely perfect, deserves infinite honor from His creatures. As their greatest Benefactor, He deserves infinite gratitude and thanksgiving. On account of their sins, He deserves from them infinite atonement. And on account of their numberless wants, both spiritual and corporal, and of their unworthiness, they can lay no claims to His infinite bounty. But God seemed satisfied, in the Old Law, with the prayers of the people and the sacrifices of the blood of animals, for the fulfilment of all the obligations of men towards Him. But why? Because those victims were figures, shadows of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His divine Son, on the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was a superabundant payment of all the debts of mankind to God, for it was the substitution of a divine Person for mankind.

II. The Sacrifice of the Mass.

1. On the cross Jesus Christ offered Himself as Victim to His heavenly Father in the place of guilty mankind, and superabundantly paid all their debts to God, giving Him by His sacrifice infinite honor and thanksgiving, atoning

for all their sins, and obtaining for them all necessary graces. But to profit men individually, the effects or merits of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross have to be applied to each one, just as water, however great its quantity, will not cleanse us, unless we wash ourselves with it, nor will food profit us, unless we eat it. The merits and blood of our divine Saviour, once offered by Him for us on the cross, are applied individually through the sacraments and the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

2. The New Law must have a sacrifice as the only adequate worship of God; it must be a perfect sacrifice, in order to fulfil properly all the figures of the ancient sacrifices. Like the New Law itself, this sacrifice must be perpetual. Our divine Saviour offered Himself a sacrifice on the cross only once, in one place only. On the cross He was both Priest and Victim. There can be no sacrifice without a priest to offer it, for sacrifice and priesthood are inseparable. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is *the Sacrifice of the New Law,* but it is not the only form of this sacrifice, for St. Paul declares that Jesus Christ is "forever a priest according to the order of Melchisedech. This the Lord hath sworn, and shall not repent" (Ps. 109. 4). But if Jesus Christ is "a priest *forever,*" He must not cease offering sacrifice, but as, after dying on the cross, He rose again to die no more (Rom. 6. 9), He must continue offering His sacrifice forever in some other manner. In what manner? "*According to the order of Melchisedech,*" that is, in an unbloody manner, under the form or appearances of bread and wine, and this constantly, perpetually. And this He does in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This sacrifice is unbloody; it is, morever, infinite, for Jesus Christ, being God-man, cannot, like Melchisedech, offer mere bread and wine, but must offer a sacrifice worthy of His priesthood and worthy of the perfect religion He founded; and this sacrifice or Victim which He offers, is Himself, that is, the "Living Bread come down from heaven" (John 6. 41).

It is identically the same sacrifice as that which He offered on the cross, since in the Mass, as on the cross, Jesus Christ Himself is both the Priest and the Victim, although the manner of offering differs. On the cross Jesus Christ personally in His human nature offered or sacrificed Himself and actually died for mankind. In the Mass Jesus Christ as priest is represented and personated by the priest saying Mass; He is the Victim offered under the appearances of bread and wine, and dies, not a physical, but a mystical death at the Communion, when the species or appearances of bread are consumed by the priest. The sacrifice of the cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass are essentially the same, since the Priest and Victim in both is Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God made man. Therefore, like the sacrifice of the Cross, the Sacrifice of the Mass is of infinite value, apart from the celebrant's holiness or unworthiness. Therefore, the Mass, like the sacrifice of the cross, which it perfectly represents, continues and applies to men, most perfectly fulfils the four-fold object of divine worship and sacrifice and, consequently, gives infinite honor and thanksgiving to God, fully atones for men's sins and deserves for them all necessary graces. Moreover, Jesus Christ, being Priest for the whole Church, daily offers, by the ministry of His representatives, in the Mass, this perfect sacrifice of Himself, as foretold by the prophet Malachy, "in every place from the rising of the sun even to the going down," and thereby applies to men the merits and effects of His death on the cross. The Sacrifice of the Mass is, therefore, like a constant Redemption for mankind.

3. Protestantism has no sacrifice, and therefore has no priesthood, and is, consequently, powerless to redeem and sanctify souls, for it does not own the merits of Jesus Christ and is powerless to apply them to mankind. It cannot, then, be the Church of Jesus Christ, nor can it continue His work.

4. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass has always been offered

in the Church from her very foundation, as can be seen from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul in the New Testament; also from all the ancient liturgies. At first, when the Christians were few, it was offered by the bishop assisted by his clergy; and later on, when they had become numerous, by all priests, as it is done at present.

III. Necessity and Reality of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

1. Its necessity. Mankind needs a sacrifice, in order to worship God as He deserves. God, the Creator, Lord and Ruler of all things, is infinitely holy and perfect. The universality of sacrifice from the very origin of mankind clearly shows that it is the most appropriate means of giving due honor to God. But to honor God as much as He deserves, no finite offering, or sacrifice, is sufficient, for there should be due proportion between the offering, or sacrifice, and God, between the offering and the infinite obligation of the offerer, between the infinite guilt of sin and the infinite reparation and the satisfaction due for it; between heaven, the end of man, and the means of gaining it. The Sacrifice of the Mass alone fills all these conditions. It alone is worthy of God's infinite Majesty and dominion; all therein are worthy of God, the Priest, the Victim and the act of offering. It is Jesus Christ who is both the Priest and the Victim, who offers the Sacrifice of the Mass through the celebrant, His representative. Jesus is the willing Victim out of zeal for the glory of His heavenly Father and out of love for mankind.

2. It is really an acceptable sacrifice to God, for it was willed and instituted by His divine Son, Jesus Christ. It was prefigured by Melchisedech's sacrifice of bread and wine, and prophesied by Malachy as the "clean oblation acceptable to God that should be offered in every place." It was instituted by our divine Saviour at the Last Supper,

with the direction to His apostles to offer the same Sacrifice in remembrance of Him, in remembrance of His death on the cross and as its continuation, perpetuation and application. And from her very foundation the Church has always believed in and offered the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

IV. What We Possess in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

1. In the Sacrifice of the Mass we possess the means of giving God infinite honor. All rational creatures are bound to honor God as their Creator and Lord, as their Chief End. All the honor that all rational creatures can offer of themselves to God, is infinitely disproportionate to the honor that is His due. The Sacrifice of the Mass, however, gives to God all the honor that is His due, that is, infinite honor, for the Priest is Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself, the Victim is Jesus Christ, and the celebrant merely represents and personates Jesus Christ; and God accepts His divine Son's Sacrifice as *our own,* as the infinite honor due Him, because He has given us Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, as our Brother, as the Head of the body of which we are the members. The members of the body participate in all that their head does and possesses.

2. In the Sacrifice of the Mass we possess the surest means of obtaining happiness in time and in eternity. We need God's blessing, His grace and His forgiveness of the temporal and of the eternal punishments we owe Him for our sins. The Sacrifice of the Mass is the most powerful means not only of giving God the honor due Him, but also of propitiating Him for our sins and obtaining His forgiveness, and, moreover, of thanking Him appropriately for all His benefits, and of obtaining all the graces and benefits we need in this life and in the next. For all these benefits we give and pay God an infinite price in the Sacrifice of the Mass, in which Jesus Christ, His divine Son, is both Priest and Victim.

V. Who Participate in the Fruits of the Sacrifice of the Mass?

1. In general. In every Mass that is celebrated all over the world, the whole Church participates; the triumphant Church in heaven receives an increase of glory, by reflection from God; the suffering Church in purgatory receives an alleviation of pains; and the militant Church on earth receives an increase of grace and strength. Moreover, all who are baptized, even those who are in error, receive therefrom actual grace, earthly blessings; extraordinary favors are bestowed on individuals; and even unbelievers and the heathen and all creatures derive certain benefits therefrom.

2. Special participants in the fruits of the Sacrifice of the Mass. First, all who are directly concerned in its celebration, such as, the priest celebrating, the server, those for whose intention Mass is said, those to whom it is specially applied, all for whom the priest makes a memento, in so far as God wills, and all who assist in body and spirit at the Mass. Every Catholic should consider it a duty of charity to have Masses said for the living and the dead, for himself or for his special intentions, such as, for his perseverance, for strength in temptation, for overcoming a bad habit, for the cure of an illness, for the grace of a good death, for the conversion of sinners or of a certain sinner, for light to know and follow his vocation, for parents, relatives, friends, benefactors, either living or dead, for the souls in purgatory.

VI. How to Assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass.

1. How sinners should hear Mass, in order to derive fruit therefrom. The Sacrifice of the Mass is intended for the cure of the sinner. It is a memorial of the Incarnation of the Son of God, of His work of man's Redemption, the application of the merits of His passion and death on the cross. The sinner is bound in conscience to

assist at holy Mass on all Sundays and Holydays of obligation, for such is the will, such the precept of God's holy Church. The sinner's own interest requires it. He should assist at it in a penitential spirit, as he would have assisted at the Saviour's death on the cross. He should, in the beginning of the Mass, join with the priest in making an humble confession of his sins to God with sincere contrition and a firm resolution to give up sin and go to confession and amend his life. He should assist at Mass also with a grateful heart for God's merciful longanimity in his regard and for the satisfaction Jesus Christ offered by His passion and death for his sins. To all these sentiments he should add fervent and earnest petitions that God may, by His all-powerful grace, enable him to give up his sins and evil habits, to do penance for them and to persevere to death in serving God faithfully.

2. How the just should assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. They should assist at it with a lively faith, as if they were actually present on Calvary at the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, bearing in mind that the Mass, being the memorial, continuation and application of His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus Himself is the Priest offering Himself as Victim therein in an unbloody manner for the salvation of mankind. They should humble themselves before God, confessing their sins to Him and craving His mercy, and being resolved to die rather than offend Him deliberately. They should remember that they owe everything they have and everything they are, their good qualities, their having been kept from committing grievous sins, to the merits of Jesus Christ, and not through any merit of their own. They should thank Jesus Christ from their inmost hearts for His infinite love towards them manifested in His passion and death, in the Holy Eucharist and in the Sacrifice of the Mass. They should make repeated acts of love of Jesus Christ who is infinitely lovable. Then they should renew their self-offering to God, and resolve to

hear Mass and go to holy Communion daily, or as often as they can. If they do not receive holy Communion during the Mass, they should make a fervent spiritual Communion. They ought also to make acts of thanksgiving to God for all the graces and benefits He has conferred on them, and of petition for their spiritual and temporal wants and for the wants of the persons for whom they intend to pray. The prayers, the petitions made during Mass are far more powerful and more pleasing to God than those made at other times, because in the Mass they are joined to those of Jesus Christ, who then prays on the altar especially for those who assist at Mass, and His prayers cannot fail to be granted, for they are the prayers of a divine Person.— (To help to keep recollected, it is advisable to take a prayer-book along, in order to use it, if necessary to keep the imagination from wandering about things mundane during the Holy Sacrifice.)

VII. How Often We Should Hear Mass.

First, we must hear Mass, under pain of mortal sin, on all Sundays and Holydays of obligation. (Mention the latter.) We are bound on those days to hear a whole Mass. He who wilfully or through carelessness comes late to Mass, commits a sin; surely a mortal sin, if he comes after the beginning of the Offertory. It is also sinful to leave the Church without necessity before Mass is over; he who thus leaves before the Communion, commits a mortal sin. (Mention briefly the reasons which dispense from hearing Mass on the days prescribed.)

Secondly, it is advisable to hear Mass as often as possible, even daily. Those who can easily hear Mass every day, but neglect doing so through indifference or sloth, lose all the benefits and graces attached to the devout assistance at Mass. Such persons refuse to God the honor they would offer Him by devoutly hearing Mass; they are ungrateful to our divine Saviour, who in His infinite love for them as

well as for other men, has instituted this Holy Sacrifice as a memorial and application of the fruits of His passion and death, and the channel of abundant graces especially for those who assist at Mass. They show also a disregard for their Mother the Church, which prescribes its daily celebration. They, moreover, commit a fault against their neighbor whom they should endeavor to lead to God by their good example. They greatly injure themselves by depriving themselves of all the graces they could obtain by daily assisting at Mass; and for many they are the very graces on which depends their keeping out of sin, their perseverance in grace and their eternal salvation.

Some object to hearing Mass daily on the plea of being too busy, and having no time. These persons should bear in mind that salvation is their all-important business, and that they ought to make sure of it by all means in their power; and one of the most powerful means of salvation is the daily attendance at Mass. How many fervent Catholics, who are as busy as they, and even more so, find time to assist daily at Mass! What others can do, you also can do, if you only have the will. "Where there is a will, there is also a way."—Rise earlier! Remember how many faults we commit and must atone for; how many dangers and temptations beset our path; how many graces and favors we need, and for how many we owe God thanks; and how much honor God deserves from us! What better means of doing all this than to assist fervently at Holy Mass every day!

Just as water from a reservoir is led through pipes into the buildings of a city to supply the wants of its inhabitants, so also the graces of salvation obtained for us by Jesus Christ through His sufferings and death, are distributed to each individual throughout the world principally by means of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"In every Mass," says St. Thomas, "we can find again the same fruit and the same benefits which Jesus Christ

secured for mankind by dying on the cross on Good Friday."

"The Mass," says St. Francis de Sales, "is the abyss of divine mercy, the fountain of divine love, the most precious means of obtaining divine grace."

"On the days we hear Mass devoutly," says St. John Chrysostom, "we receive the divine blessing on all we do."

HOLY COMMUNION

"Come, eat My bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you" (Prov. 9. 5).

"I am the bread of life. . . . If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever" (John 6. 48, 52).

Who is He that invites us so kindly, so lovingly to His Banquet? And what a wonderful invention of divine love is not the Banquet to which He invites us! The Son of God, not satisfied with becoming man, with undergoing insults and mockery, frightful torments and a cruel and shameful death out of love for us sinners, gives us as the food of our souls unto eternal life His divine flesh and blood! Holy Communion is as necessary for our souls as food is necessary for our body. Without it our soul cannot long possess spiritual life, that is, cannot long remain in the grace of God, or make progress in virtue.

I. In Holy Communion We Receive Our Divine Saviour. He dwells in us and we dwell in Him. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him" (John 6. 57). We become most intimately united with Jesus Christ. In Holy Communion we possess the Holy of holies, the Lord of lords. Oh, "if thou knewest the gift of God" (John 4. 10), if we would only endeavor to appreciate it as we ought! He is the Son, the Word, the perfect Image of the eternal Father, His equal in all things. "Who will relate His generation?" (Is. 53. 8). He is God of God, Light of Light; every knee should bend at the sound of His name; He is almighty; of His reign there is no end. He is the Word made flesh, become our Redeemer by the terrible sufferings of His passion and death. How many receive holy Communion without ad-

verting to or realizing all this! In holy Communion we receive the "Desired of the nations," and drink the blood that washed away the sins of the world; we possess our very Lord and God!

What excess of goodness and love does not the Son of God therein manifest towards us poor, frail and sinful creatures! He comes to dwell in us, that we also may dwell in Him! "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him." This is not a transitory visit on His part, for He intends it as a permanent visit, as an inseparable union, just as the union between our body and its food admits of no separation, for such is the prayer of Jesus to His heavenly Father: "That they may be one as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me" (John 17. 22, 23).

Why this intimate union between Jesus and us? That He may sanctify and strengthen us, that He may kindle divine love in us together with zeal for the divine glory, and that we may have the pledge of a glorious resurrection and eternal life. He says to us: "Behold I am with you" (Mat. 28. 20). "I am the light of the world" (John 8. 12). "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14. 6). "I have conquered the world" (John 16. 33). How many favors may we not expect from Jesus Christ, who gives Himself to us, in order to enrich us with His gifts, with the gifts of salvation! How wonderful the effects of holy Communion in so many virgins, so many penitents, so many martyrs, so many confessors of the faith, who practised heroic virtue, overcame the fiercest assaults of their own passions, of the world and of the evil spirits, who performed fearful penances and austerities, who underwent the most cruel torments human ingenuity ever devised, in order to remain faithful to God until death! Why do we not find among the sects individuals and communities heroically devoting themselves to a life of poverty, chastity and obedience, in order to serve the

poor, the aged and the orphans and to care for those afflicted with every kind of contagious diseases and even leprosy, and even for the outcasts of society, and to perform all these works of Christian charity with as great care and tenderness, as if they performed them for Jesus Christ Himself? Whence do those devoted religious and missionaries derive their strength, their heroic charity? From frequent holy Communion, which unites them most intimately with our divine Saviour, who imparts to them His own tender and self-sacrificing charity towards even the most wretched and repulsive of mankind. Why is such heroism not found among the sects? "Because," says Catharine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, "they have no Blessed Eucharist!"

How ardently we should long for holy Communion, the greatest treasure Jesus Christ has left to us in this world! What do not men undertake and do to acquire wealth, learning, influence, office, fame and to enjoy pleasures! But in holy Communion you have something infinitely greater, better and more valuable! How eagerly should you profit by every opportunity of receiving holy Communion! Magdalen, being told that Jesus called her, "arose at once" and went to Him (John 11. 29). Zacheus, when Jesus called him down from the tree he had climbed, and said to him: "It behooveth Me to stay this day at thy house," came down at once, "and received Him with joy" (Luke 19. 6). Our divine Saviour calls you, as He did Magdalen and Zacheus: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened" (Mat. 11. 28); "Come, eat My bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you" (Prov. 9. 5); "I am the bread of life. . . . If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever" (John 6. 48, 52).

II. Motives for Receiving Holy Communion.

1. The extraordinary manner in which the Blessed Eucharist was instituted. On the evening of the day pre-

ceding His death, Jesus Christ wished to give us the most striking proof of His love. Why? That the union between Him and us should be most intimate and inseparable, and that He should be also the intimate bond of love and union between men. "That they may be one as We [the Father and Himself] are one, I in them, and Thou in Me" (John 17. 22, 23). To secure this twofold object, He wished to become Himself the food of our souls, that He might be as intimately and inseparably united to our souls as the food we eat becomes intimately and inseparably united with our bodies. Hence He said: "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6. 56). Wherefore, at the Last Supper He changed bread and wine into His body and blood, that He might give to men His very body and His very blood under the appearances of bread and wine as the food of their souls.

2. His desire to be united with us was most ardent. "My delights," He says, "are to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8. 31). Hence He makes so many urgent invitations to us. (Relate here the parable Mat. 22. 1–13. "Behold I have prepared My dinner; come ye to the marriage.") In holy Communion Jesus will fulfil all our desires: "If any man thirsteth, let him come to Me" (John 7. 36). "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you" (Mat. 11. 28). "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6. 52, 55). "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I die" (Luke 22. 15).

3. The ardent desire and fervor of the early Christians. They received holy Communion every day, when it was possible for them to do so. The great Council of Trent expresses the wish that priests should celebrate Mass every day, that the faithful should, if possible, assist daily at holy Mass and receive holy Communion whenever they as-

sist at this most holy Sacrifice, that is, every day, if possible. Pope Pius X issued a Decree permitting and urging all the faithful, whatever be their state of life, to receive holy Communion not only frequently, but even daily, if possible, provided they are in the state of grace, have a good intention, and make a due preparation and thanksgiving.

4. All the Fathers of the Church recommend and urge frequent, and even daily, Communion. St. John Chrysostom expects all who assist at Mass should also receive holy Communion after the priest. St. Jerome says it is a real happiness for him to be able to testify that in Rome and in Spain the faithful were accustomed to receive holy Communion daily. St. Augustine, explaining the Our Father, says: "Holy Communion is the 'daily bread' we pray God to 'give us this day,' that is, every day. Know, therefore, that it behooves you daily to receive holy Communion. Hence live so, as to be worthy to receive Jesus Christ every day."

5. As long as the early Christians were faithful in the practice of daily Communion, they were fervent in the service of God and models of virtue. Their daily holy Communion enabled them cheerfully to make every sacrifice, to undergo every torment, and even death itself, for their holy faith. But when, in the course of time, they gradually gave up that holy practice, their fervor also relaxed, and they grew cold and indifferent in the service of God and began to lead lives hardly better than the pagans. Our own experience shows it. Who are the wicked, the scandalous, the intemperate, the impure, the uncharitable, the dishonest, the detractors, liars, blasphemers and other habitual sinners? Not those who receive holy Communion daily, or frequently, but those who seldom or never receive holy Communion.

6. The remedy for the tepid, for the careless, is frequent holy Communion! As to those habitual sinners, who have

not the moral strength or courage to give up their evil habits, to overcome violent temptations, to shun or give up the occasions of sin, their most powerful and successful remedy is frequent, and even daily Communion, as urged by our late Pope, the saintly Pius X, in the state of grace, with a good intention and due preparation and thanksgiving.

7. It is the will of Jesus Christ Himself that we should frequently receive holy Communion, for He says: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. . . . Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life" (John 6. 52, 54, 55). Our divine Saviour does not say: "If any man has eaten," nor, "Except you have eaten," nor "He that hath eaten," but He uses the present tense, to denote a habit, the habitual or frequent receiving of holy Communion. And it is to such a habit that He promises life everlasting, or salvation.

8. Our own interest requires frequent holy Communion on our part, for we are weak, spiritually infirm and helpless of ourselves, sorely tempted frequently, and often even daily. There is no better means of acquiring strength and spiritual health and vigor than to eat frequently, and even daily, the Bread of angels, the Bread of the strong, for we thereby participate in the power, in the virtues of the Son of God, since, after a worthy holy Communion, we can say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2. 20). Holy Communion is therefore the Bread of the elect!

On the other hand, he who never or only seldom receives holy Communion is spiritually weak and grows daily weaker and weaker the more seldom he receives! Truly he may say: "I am smitten as grass and my heart is withered, because I forgot [neglected] to eat my bread" (Ps. 101. 5). He easily yields to temptations, for he has

not strength to resist and overcome them, because he has failed to feed his soul with the fortifying Bread from heaven. He soon becomes the slave of some evil habit, which gradually becomes a second nature to him and leads him to perdition! St. Francis de Sales says that two classes of persons should frequently go to holy Communion: the perfect, that they may become more perfect and persevere, and the imperfect, that they may become perfect and holy, and thus gain heaven!

III. When to Receive Holy Communion.

1. Every Catholic who has attained the age of discretion is bound to receive holy Communion during the Easter-time, which extends in the United States from the First Sunday in Lent to Trinity Sunday, that is, six weeks before Easter Sunday and eight weeks after it. The Catholic who neglects this duty is *liable* to be excommunicated during life and to be deprived of Christian burial after his death.

2. What is meant by "'the age of discretion'? This question is answered in the Decree approved on the seventh day of August, 1910, by the late Pope Pius X, of holy memory, and promulgated as a law of the Catholic Church on the following day, the eighth of August of the same year. The chief provisions of this decree are the following: 1. *The age of discretion* required both for confession and Communion is the time when the child begins to reason, that is, about the seventh year, more or less. From this time on the obligation of satisfying the precept of both Confession and Communion begins. 2. Both for First Confession and First Communion a complete and *perfect knowledge* of Christian Doctrine is *not necessary*. The child will, however, be obliged to learn gradually the whole catechism according to its ability. 3. The *knowledge* of Christian Doctrine *required* in children in order to be properly prepared for First Holy Communion, is that they understand ac-

cording to their capacity those mysteries of Faith which are necessary as a means of salvation; that they be able to distinguish the Eucharist from common and material bread, and also approach the sacred table with the devotion becoming their age. 4. The *obligation* of the precept of Confession and Communion which rests upon the children, falls back principally upon those in whose care they are, that is, parents, confessors, teachers and their pastor. It belongs to the father, however, or to the person taking his place, as also to the confessor, as the Roman Catechism declares, to admit the child to First Holy Communion. . . . 5. Those who have the care of children should use all diligence, so that after First Communion the children shall often approach the holy table, *even daily,* if possible, as Jesus Christ and our Mother the Church desire, and that they do it with a devotion becoming their age. They should bear in mind their most important duty, by which they are obliged to have the children present at the public instructions in catechism; otherwise they must supply this religious instruction in some other way."

The provisions of this Decree are so important for the preservation of innocence and of the practice of faith in the children, that His Holiness has added to the Decree, when presented to him for his approbation the following strict regulations, to show the great importance he attached to its provisions: "He (Pope Pius X) has commanded all the Ordinaries (the Bishops) to make known the present Decree not only to the pastors and the clergy, but also to the people, *to whom it shall be read every year at Easter time in the vernacular.* The Ordinaries (Bishops) themselves will be obliged at the end of every five years to give an account of the observance of this Decree to the Holy See, together with the other affairs of their dioceses."

3. The hour of our death, the last moment of our life is the most important of all for us, for on that hour, on that moment depends our lot for eternity; if we are then in the

state of grace, heaven with all its happiness and joys will be forever ours. But, if we are then in mortal sin, hell with its torments will be our abode for all eternity! At death we journey from this life into eternity. It behooves us to start on this journey with the food that will enable us safely to reach heaven, our destination, just as the food given by the angel to the prophet Elias enabled him to reach the mountain of God after a long journey, as Holy Scripture relates: "The angel of the Lord came and touched Elias, and said to him: Arise; eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go. And he arose and ate and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto the Mount of God" (3 Kings 19. 7, 8). When we are sick and in danger of death, about to depart from this life on our journey to eternity, we need a strengthening food, the Bread of life, the Bread of the strong, holy Communion as our Viaticum, as provision for that great journey. This Bread of life, the Viaticum, imparts to those in danger of death, first, the grace to conquer the last assaults of the devil doing his best, since he knows it is his last chance, to drag them into hell; and secondly, to die in the grace of God. We should often pray to God to grant us the inestimable grace to receive worthily in our last illness the sacraments of the dying and all the helps and consolations of our holy religion. (Pray daily for this to St. Joseph, the patron and protector of the dying.)

IV. Preparation for Holy Communion.

1. It behooves us to be well prepared to perform the greatest and holiest action of our life, that is, to receive holy Communion. Remember that for this action "a house [dwelling] is prepared, not for man, but for God" (1 Paral. 29. 1). Our own interest requires that we be well prepared, for the Blessed Eucharist is spiritually "life to the good and death to the wicked." The Bread of life must not be eaten as ordinary bread, as food for the body,

but as the food of the soul. We must, therefore, be in the state of grace to eat this heavenly Bread. If we are in mortal sin, a good confession is indispensable before we receive holy Communion. Moreover, we must be interiorly prepared so as to appreciate what we receive. The fruits of holy Communion, the graces our divine Saviour will bestow therein on us are proportionate to our dispositions; hence a careful preparation is required by the dignity of this Sacrament, the most excellent of all, since it gives us the very Author of grace, whilst the other sacraments impart to us only certain special graces. One holy Communion is, of itself, able to make us saints, if we were duly prepared.

2. How should we prepare for holy Communion? Some of the requisites concern our body, and the others, our soul. As to our body, we must be fasting from midnight, so that from the previous midnight not even the smallest quantity of food or drink has been swallowed by us; our dress should be neat and clean. As to our soul, we must be in the state of grace, that is, free from mortal sin. Moreover, we should make acts of a lively faith in the Real Presence, of firm and boundless confidence in Jesus Christ, of tender love full of fervor and reverence for Him, and an intense desire and hunger for the Bread of life.

V. Effects of a Worthy Communion.

He that receives holy Communion worthily 1, is intimately united with Jesus Christ, for such a one, He Himself says, "abideth in Me, and I in him." The very word "communion" expresses this intimate union. 2, He receives in conversing with Jesus greater knowledge of spiritual things, of things pertaining to salvation; he is filled with great joy, like the two disciples going to Emmaus were greatly enlightened, and filled with happiness, for they said: "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke?" (Luke 24. 32). 3, Through the divine love it excites within

us, it cleanses us of our daily faults, and consumes gradually the rust of original sin within us. 4, The Bread of the strong imparts to us strength against temptation, power over Satan, and fills us with heavenly thoughts and desires. 5, It enables us to make progress in virtue by increasing our fervor. 6, It is a pledge of eternal life, as the priest prays when he gives us holy Communion, saying: "May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto eternal life!" And this is in accordance with our divine Saviour's promise: "If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever. . . . He that eateth this Bread, shall live forever" (John 6. 52, 59). 7. A pledge of a glorious resurrection: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6. 55).

When holy Communion fails to produce all these effects, it is a sign that we have made a poor or careless preparation; or it shows that there was, on our part, a want of childlike confidence in Jesus Christ, or the lack of generosity in corresponding with divine grace.

VI. The Abomination of an Unworthy Communion.

(See the Matter given in "Sacrilegious Communion.")

1. In its circumstances. In itself, it is a fresh betrayal of the Son of God, a fresh crucifixion. In its circumstances, it is worse than the crime of Judas; the hypocrisy is even meaner. (Relate the circumstances of the betrayal of Judas.) The unworthy communicant has no material interest to further, no thirty pieces of silver to acquire, and with an appearance of piety and divine love, he publicly commits his crime and delivers his God, his Redeemer into the power of Satan reigning in his heart. Pilate and the Jews crucified Jesus; they knew Him not; they put His mortal body to death out of revenge, as an enemy; but they were only the instruments of divine justice and benefited mankind. His body was laid in a new tomb.

His death was glorified by wonders! But the sacrilegious communicant "crucifies Jesus and makes a mockery of Him" (Hebr. 6. 6), without any good result to mankind, and with a fearful offense against God and eternal perdition to himself!

2. In its consequences. "It were better for him, if he had not been born" (Mat. 26. 24). Frequently temporal misfortunes overtake the unworthy communicant, and even whole towns and regions where there are a number of unworthy communicants. Often those guilty of this crime die suddenly without time or opportunity to repent, to prepare for death by a good confession! Others who continue to receive holy Communion unworthily, become spiritually blind and grow hardened in sacrilege and die impenitent!

VII. Thanksgiving After Holy Communion.

The saints tell us that there is no time more precious than the time after holy Communion, whilst Jesus remains really present within us. St. Teresa says that after our holy Communion Jesus is seated within us as on a throne and asks us: "My child, what can I do for thee?" Our prayers, when Jesus is still in us, are of greater merit and efficacy than at other times. They manifest our deep love and affection for Him who loves us with an infinite love. Jesus then prays in us, with us and for us.

Having received Jesus, we should welcome Him with the tenderest affection, and express our astonishment at His condescending to come and dwell in our miserable heart. Then let us re-animate our faith in His presence within us and, with the most ardent love, we should testify our inmost gratitude for His infinite goodness and condescension. Then let us listen to Jesus saying to us: "My child, give Me thy heart." Replying, let us consecrate ourselves wholly and unreservedly to Him, offering Him our heart and all its affections, and our whole being. Then let us

imitate Zacheus who, to express his gratitude to Jesus for His visit, made and executed several good resolutions. Let us make the resolutions we need the most to keep out of sin and to overcome whatever sinful habit we may have contracted.

After this let us make petitions for ourselves and for others. Let us ask for really great things, and ask them with perfect confidence, such as the forgiveness of our sins, strength in temptations, trials and sufferings, the grace of prayer, an ardent love for Him, a great devotion to His holy Mother Mary, a boundless confidence in His merits and in Mary's intercession and the grace of perseverance until death. Then let us pray for all the members of our family, for our relatives, superiors, companions, friends and enemies, for all entrusted to our care, for the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the good, for the sorely tried and tempted, for all in their agony and those who will die this day, for all we have promised to pray, who pray for us and have requested our prayers, and for the souls in purgatory, especially those who have a claim to our prayers. Let us endeavor to spend the whole day of our holy Communion in joyful remembrance of the great happiness we have received.

One holy Communion well made is the best preparation for the next one. When preparing ourselves for it, we should reflect: "Oh! if this were to be my last holy Communion, how carefully would I strive to make it to the best of my ability! And then how lovingly and fervently would we not receive that Bread of life as the Pledge of life everlasting!

VIII. Spiritual Communion.

Those who cannot receive holy Communion when they assist at holy Mass, should, when they see the priest and the communicants receiving holy Communion, have an ardent desire to receive it also. They should think in their

minds: "Oh! if I also could receive my Saviour! If He only would come into my heart in holy Communion, how happy it would make me!" If you have such a desire, such a longing in your heart, say in your mind to Jesus: "O my Jesus, I am sorry for my sins; forgive me, I will never offend Thee more. My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the most Holy Sacrament. I love Thee above all things, and I desire to receive Thee into my soul. Since I cannot now really receive Thee, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace Thee as if Thou wert already there and unite myself wholly to Thee; never permit me to be separated from Thee."

A shorter act. "I believe that Thou, O Jesus, art present in the most Holy Sacrament. I love Thee and desire Thee. Come into my heart. I embrace Thee; O Jesus, never again leave me."

We can make a spiritual communion not only in church during Mass, but as often as we wish by day and by night, and wherever we may be. Some holy persons are accustomed to make very many every day.

The fruits of our spiritual communions depend on the intensity of our love and desire for Jesus. The greater our love and desire, the greater and the more abundant will be the fruits we shall derive from our spiritual communions.

DESIRE AND DISTASTE FOR HOLY COMMUNION

"She said within herself: If I only touch His garment, I shall be healed" (Mat. 9. 21).

Great indeed was the confidence of the woman who had suffered much for twelve years from an incurable disease. After spending in vain the greater part of her wealth on renowned physicians and their remedies, she heard of the wonderful cures Jesus Christ was performing among the Jews, and determined to go to Him. Having arrived at the place where He was, she found Him surrounded by an immense crowd listening with rapture to His heavenly doctrine. Charmed by His words and even more so by His majestic and dignified appearance, she pushed her way through the great crowd, saying within herself: "If I only touch His garment, I shall be healed." After long and repeated efforts she succeeded in getting behind Him and got near enough to be able to touch the hem of His garment, and the result was her instantaneous cure!

If the garment of our divine Saviour possessed so great a virtue, how great is not the sanctifying virtue of His body and blood in the Blessed Eucharist in those who receive them with the proper dispositions! We should be as eager to receive holy Communion as that woman was to be cured. We should long for holy Communion, and should receive it, if not daily, as the Church desires, at least as often as it is in our power. With regard to receiving holy Communion Catholics are divided into two classes; the one has an ardent desire for holy communion and endeavors to receive it as often as possible; the other seems

to have no relish for it, but rather a distaste for it; hence they either go only at Easter, or even stay away from it altogether.

I. Desire for Holy Communion.

1. Motives for such a desire. Holy Communion is the food of our soul, and has on our soul effects similar to those of good, healthy food on our body. It imparts strength to the soul and keeps up its spiritual life. Since we receive therein the body and blood of Jesus Christ, we are most intimately united with Him and participate in His almighty power, and thus become so powerful as to be able to overcome the temptations of the world and the devil and even our very strong and deeply rooted passions. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him" (John 6. 57). Such a desire enables the good to persevere in the practice of virtue. It also greatly benefits the sinner; for a sinner who has an ardent desire for holy Communion will soon repent of his sinful life and long to lead a good life. He is like the repentant prodigal son: "How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger" (Luke 15. 17). "When shall I come and approach before the face of God" (Ps. 41. 3).

2. Advantages of this desire. Although not sufficient in itself, it is the first disposition for holy Communion. To be able to eat food with relish, a good appetite is necessary. Holy Communion is the food of our soul. "The Bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world. My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6). "If any one thirsteth, let him come to Me" (John 7. 37). "He hath filled the hungry soul with good things" (Ps. 106. 9). "They that eat Me, shall not hunger" (Eccli. 24. 29). This desire is the principle, the prime-mover of all the other dispositions. He that has an ardent desire to receive holy Communion worthily, will

feel constrained, as it were, not to neglect any of the necessary preparations. He will, in fact, make a good confession, if necessary, awaken true contrition, a lively faith in the Real Presence, a firm confidence and an ardent love. It is a great evil, an abuse, to try to extinguish this desire in any one! We should, as much as possible, render it always more and more ardent.

3. Qualities of this desire. It should be humble, considering our misery, our frailty, our sinfulness. It should also not be presumptuous, light-minded or obstinate, but docile and submissive to a prudent confessor. Moreover, it should be accompanied with a sincere love of our divine Saviour. "As the hart panteth after the fountain of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God! My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God" (Ps. 41. 2, 3).

II. Distaste for Holy Communion.

There are two kinds of distaste for holy Communion. One of which is a trial sent by God to good and holy persons. It is not wilful; on the contrary, such persons are greatly pained on account of it. It behooves them to bear such a trial with patience and resignation and not to omit a single holy Communion on account of such a feeling of distaste, and to receive holy Communion with as much love and fervor as possible. The second kind of distaste is that of the tepid and careless.

1. The origin of such a distaste for holy Communion is a relaxed and careless life, devoid of prayer, self-watchfulness, of self-denial, a life addicted to one's ease and comfort, to sensual pleasures and enjoyments, to worldliness, to a hatred of everything disagreeable or requiring exertion and self-restraint. Such persons say of holy Communion what the rebellious Israelites said of the manna in the desert: "Our soul loatheth this food" (Numb. 21. 5). Holy Communion demands of us a different life. However frequent it may be, it makes the careless and tepid

Christian no better, and why? "Because thou hast left thy first fervor" (Apoc. 2. 4). The tepid perform all their devotions, not with fervor, with earnestness, with a desire to please God or to save their souls, but only through the force of habit or some merely human motive!

2. Its results. Being a product or fruit of tepidity, it serves only to increase tepidity. The less frequent, the less fervent our Communions, the less grace and fruit we derive from them, the less strength we have, and the less watchful we become over ourselves, and the less inclined we are to exert ourselves to combat temptation, to serve God faithfully, and the greater the danger we are in of going astray and losing our soul. "Behold they that go far from Thee, shall perish" (Ps. 72. 27).

3. Its remedies. The tepid should, first, endeavor to discover the causes of their tepidity, of their distaste, and its effects in them. Secondly, they should be constantly on their guard against tepidity and strive in all their actions to overcome it and perform them with fervor, with a desire to please God. Thirdly, they should seek and strictly obey a good confessor. And finally, they should often have recourse to prayer, saying: Lord, "draw me after Thee" (Cant. 1. 3).

HOLY COMMUNION UNDER ONE KIND

Although our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist under the appearances of bread and of wine, it is not necessary for holy Communion to receive it under both kinds, under the appearances of both bread and wine, but it suffices to receive it under one kind only, as the Catholic Church strictly directs for the laity. The reason is that Jesus Christ is whole and entire, as Man and God, under each kind.

After the consecration of the Mass the body of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread is His real *living* body, and is therefore actually united to His blood and soul and also to His divinity, for His human nature is inseparable from His divine Person. Therefore Jesus Christ is whole and entire under the appearances of bread. In like manner, He is whole and entire under the appearances of wine, for there His Blood is His real *living* blood, and is therefore united to, not separated from, His body and soul. Where His living blood is, there also is necessarily His real living body and soul and His divine Person, or divinity. Therefore Jesus Christ is whole and entire, as true man and true God under the appearances of wine. Consequently, he who receives holy Communion under the appearances of bread only, or of wine only, receives Jesus Christ whole and entire, as true God and true man, and that is just as much as he who would receive holy Communion under both kinds.

This is also what the very words of Jesus Christ Himself express: "If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever; and the Bread which I will give, is My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6. 52). Here Jesus Christ

attributes to *the eating of the Bread* the very same effect as He does to him who eats His flesh and drinks His blood: "He that eateth My flesh *and* drinketh My blood hath everlasting life" (v. 55). No one knows the meaning of Christ's teaching on the subject of holy Communion better than St. Paul, to whom Jesus Christ Himself had made a special revelation of it. "I have received of the Lord," he says, "that which I have also delivered unto you. . . . Therefore whosoever shall eat this Bread OR drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body AND blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11. 23, 27). Whether a person receives unworthily either "this Bread" (the body of the Lord under the appearances of bread), or the chalice of the Lord (His blood under the appearances of wine), he *in either case* is guilty of the same identical sin, that is, he is guilty of profaning the body *and* the blood of Jesus Christ. In other words, whether he receives Jesus Christ unworthily under only one kind, or under both kinds, he, in either case, commits the very same crime as he who receives unworthily under both kinds, "for," continues St. Paul, "he that eateth AND drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (v. 29). Hence, whether we receive holy Communion either under one kind only or under both kinds, we in either case receive Jesus Christ whole and entire. Hence the laity receiving holy Communion under one kind only, receive as much as the priest who communicates under both kinds. They receive our Saviour whole and entire, as true man and true God, and the priest receives just the same!

The custom of the early Christians was to receive usually under both kinds, but not always, nor even every one. St. Luke says of them: "They were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles and in the communication of the breaking of Bread and in prayers" (Acts 2. 42). This means that they assembled together for the celebration of the

Mass, and in holy Communion and received it under one kind, as the breaking of the Bread of life denotes. Holy Communion was administered even to babes, either by giving them a particle of the Sacred Host dipped in the chalice containing the precious blood, or merely by a drop of the same. To the dying holy Communion was given as Viaticum under the appearances of bread only. As the appearances of wine in holy Communion still retained the natural effects of wine, those who could not bear wine, received holy Communion only under the appearances of bread. In times of persecution the Christians were given the Blessed Eucharist under the appearances of bread only to take home that they might in case of danger, administer Communion to themselves. In certain regions the Christians, during persecution, would assemble for Mass before dawn. Sometimes they were waylaid on their return home by pagans, who were well posted; and to find out whether they were Christians, the pagans used to smell their breath, and if they discovered the odor of wine in it, would arrest them and deliver them up to the persecutors. To protect the Christians, it became customary in those places to receive holy Communion only under the appearances of bread.

Later on when the Christians became more numerous, then the danger of profaning the precious blood by spilling and other accidents and the difficulty of giving holy Communion under both kinds to hundreds and thousands, as well as the inability of keeping the precious blood of Christ, since the accidents or species of the wine were subject to the natural laws of the wine, that is of turning sour, the custom became very general for the laity to receive holy Communion only under one kind. We must bear in mind that as soon as the appearances of either the bread or the wine deteriorate and corrupt, the Real Presence of Jesus Christ therein ceases.

When heretics began to teach that holy Communion under both kinds is absolutely necessary, the Church, to con-

demn this error and for the reasons given above and others besides, decreed that in future the laity should be given holy Communion under only one kind, that is, only under the appearances of bread.

But the priest communicates under both kinds! Yes, because of the Sacrifice of the Mass. In it the bread and the wine are consecrated separately to denote the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, to figure the separation thereon of His blood from his body. And since the Victim of the Sacrifice must be consumed by the priest, the priest receives Communion under both kinds. Non-Catholics need not find fault with this, for Catholics receive Jesus Christ Himself, whilst Non-Catholics, having neither sacrifice nor priesthood, in their communion have nothing but mere bread and wine. How thankful to God we Catholics should be!

UNWORTHY COMMUNION

"Whoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (I Cor. 11. 27).

What a horrible crime is unworthy communion! It is a crime against our divine Saviour's very body and blood. The sentence against the unworthy communicant is pronounced already in this life, for, says St. Paul, "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (1 Cor. 11. 29). Why does the unworthy communicant go to the communion-table in the state of mortal sin? He wishes to deceive the public by a pretense of piety. But he receives deadly poison, for the body and blood of Jesus, the source of supernatural life, becomes to him the source of eternal death! Sacrilegious, or unworthy, communion, first, is an enormous sin, and, second, is most terribly punished!

I. It is AN ENORMOUS SIN, for it directly offends and attacks Jesus Christ Himself.

1. It is a horrible profanation. Sacrilege is the profanation of something sacred. But there is nothing more holy and sacred than the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Therefore, an unworthy communion is the most heinous of sacrileges. Consult history and you will find how fanatical Jews, how Huguenots and other heretics, how unbelievers and burglars, even in our times, have cast the Sacred Hosts into the mire, or trampled upon them, stabbed them with daggers, fed them to their horses and other animals, burnt them, spit upon them and treated them with every manner of indignity and

hatred. How fearful are such crimes! And yet, as remarks St. Augustine, "it is as detestable and abominable a crime as any of these, to put the Son of God into the polluted mouth of him who is in the state of mortal sin!" St. Paul considered it a sort of profanation for Christians, whom he calls temples of the Holy Ghost, merely to dwell with pagans. But Jesus is infinite Holiness, and the Church, therefore, expresses her astonishment, that He did not abhor to dwell in the womb of Mary, the purest of virgins. But what a horrible profanation to compel Him to enter the heart, the soul, which is a dwelling fit only for the unclean spirit!

2. It is a barefaced insolence. Sin is a deed of darkness; the sinner usually conceals himself to commit sin. He is ashamed of his sin; its very name brings the blush to his cheeks. He dreads to be seen or found out. "Every one that doeth evil," says Jesus Himself, "hateth the light" (John 3. 20). "The thief cometh by night." "The eye of the adulterer observeth darkness" (Job. 24. 15). Not so the unworthy communicant. He is not deterred by the presence of the multitude assisting at the Mass, or by the adoration of the numberless angels, faith tells him, that are adoring the Saviour under the sacred species, nor by the religious reverence and awe visible on every one's countenance. He boldly directs his steps towards the communion-railing. Stop, sinner! where art thou going? Where is thy faith? Where thy gratitude towards thy greatest Benefactor, thy very God, who died for thee! Dost thou not see the devil ready to take complete possession of thee? But nothing can stop him! He goes with satanic hypocrisy to the communion-railing, kneels down and, whilst the priest is saying: "May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep thy soul unto eternal life," and blessing him with the Lord's body, places on the hypocrite's tongue the Saviour's pure and immaculate body; and the unworthy communicant, Judas-like, turns Jesus

over to the insults of the devil dwelling within him, and thus stains his soul with a horrid sacrilege and thereby eats his own condemnation to hell!

3. The foulest ingratitude. There is no mystery in which Jesus Christ testifies greater love for men. In it He exhausts, as it were, all the treasures of His power. How deeply He abases Himself in changing bread and wine into His own body and blood! In being really present under the appearances of bread and wine! How ineffably precious the gift He bestows in this Sacrament! He, the Almighty, cannot bestow a greater gift than this on us, for there is nothing so great as God, the infinite and perfect Being. But the unworthy communicant outrages Jesus Christ most shockingly in this mystery of His love. He is even worse than the traitor Judas! Judas sold his divine Master for thirty pieces of silver and, with the sign of the most affectionate friendship, betrayed Him into the hands of His most deadly enemies. Jesus said to him: "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22. 48). And the unworthy communicant receives into his criminal heart, in which Satan reigns, his Saviour, his God, who loved him so far as to die a cruel and ignominious death for him, and now gives Himself to him as the food of his soul and the pledge of life eternal; and the unworthy communicant delivers his Saviour, his God to the devil. Oh, if Jews, pagans, heretics, unbelievers ill-treat and insult Jesus, He does not feel so greatly offended, for they know no better and have not been the recipients of such great favors from Him! But that a Catholic, called to the true faith and reared in it, loaded with so many precious and inestimable graces, and powerful means of salvation, who knows full well what Jesus is, what Jesus has done and suffered for him, how greatly Jesus loves him, and how ineffable the glory Jesus has destined and prepared for him in heaven, that such a Catholic should, Judas-like, be so ungrateful and so bold and impudent as

to outrage, in presence of a whole congregation, Jesus in the sacrament of His love and receive Him into his heart polluted with foul sins and the foul slavery of Satan, is the height of shamelessness and ingratitude! How sorrowfully does Jesus Christ complain of this through the psalmist: "If My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it. . . . But thou, a man of one mind, My guide and My familiar, who didst take sweetmeats with Me!" (Ps. 54. 13–15).

4. It is the crime of deicide! He who receives holy Communion unworthily, says St. Paul, "is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11. 27). Such sinners "again crucify to themselves the son of God" (Hebr. 6. 6). They are worse than the Jews who crucified our divine Saviour, for the Jews did not know that Jesus was the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind; but the Catholic, who receives holy Communion unworthily, knows and believes in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist and is fully aware of the crime he is committing. Moreover, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by the Jews effected the Redemption of mankind; but the crucifixion of Jesus anew by the unworthy communicant has not the least good effect, but is his condemnation to the endless punishment of hell, for he thereby delivers himself wholly into the power of Satan.

Who are guilty of this horrible crime? All those who knowingly receive holy Communion in the state of mortal sin. These are: All who wilfully conceal mortal sins or their number in confession; who misrepresent their sins in confession, for instance, confess impure actions merely as bad thoughts, say nothing about those circumstances that change the species of sins; who omit confessing many grievous sins, because they made only a very careless examination of conscience and preparation, or even none at all, before confession; who have no real contrition for their sins, no firm purpose of amendment; who are not resolved

to avoid the proximate occasions of sin; who are unwilling to make a necessary restitution or reparation of the injury they have done to their neighbor; who go to holy Communion without having obtained absolution from their grievous sins; who receive the sacraments merely out of human respect; who belong to forbidden secret societies. All these commit sacrilege, are guilty of the body of the Lord and eat their own condemnation.

II. The Unworthy Communicant is Deservedly Most Terribly Punished.

In the Old Law sacrilege was often fearfully punished on the spot. Two sons of Aaron were consumed by fire for placing a strange fire on the altar (Levit. 10. 1, 2). Heliodorus, who had broken into the temple to rob its treasures, was miraculously struck down and frightfully beaten (2 Mach. 3. 23–29) almost to death by angels. Oza was struck dead for merely touching the Ark of the Covenant without due reverence, and other Israelites were similarly punished for gazing irreverently at it (1 and 2 Kings c. 6). Ananias and Sapphira met with sudden death for telling a lie to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5). Therefore, as St. Paul says, "how much do you think that he deserveth worse punishment who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" (Hebr. 10. 29). Holy Communion is the marriage-feast of the Son of God with our soul. To partake of this feast we must be clothed in an appropriate wedding-garment, that is, our soul must be in the state of grace, otherwise we shall be cast into the outward darkness, that is, into hell (Mat. 22. 13).

1. Temporal punishments of sacrilege. How many temporal misfortunes, how many diseases and infirmities are but temporal punishments of the unworthy communion of the individual, or of some member of the family! "Therefore," says St. Paul, "there are many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep" (in death) (1 Cor. 11. 30).

How many examples of persons struck dead after receiving holy Communion unworthily, as is related by St. Cyprian and other reliable writers.

2. Spiritual punishments. The unworthy communicant "eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (1 Cor. 11. 29). History tells us that certain persons guilty of enormous crimes were executed with their crimes branded on their foreheads. The acts of the trial of other great criminals were burnt together with those criminals so as to leave no records of their shocking crimes. But the unworthy communicant is punished by his very crime, for by his sacrilegious communion he actually eats his own condemnation to the endless torments of hell; that is, his eternal condemnation becomes, by his sacrilegious act, incorporated in him, becomes identified with him as really as the food, with which he nourishes his body, becomes a part of himself and inseparable from him. What the Evangelist says of Judas is applicable to the unworthy communicant: "And after the morsel Satan entered into him" (John 13. 27). "The devil having now put into the heart of Judas" (v. 2). Before your unworthy communion the devil still trembled before you; but after it he is the master of your heart, and sows therein whatever he wishes. Nay, to you the words of Jesus are applicable: "One of you is a devil" (John 6. 71). The unworthy communicant is a traitor for, like Judas, he betrays the Son of God to the devil! Wherefore "woe to that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed" (Mat. 26. 24).

It is no wonder that the unworthy communicant is spiritually blind, and does not perceive his sad state. If he continues to receive holy Communion without previously repairing his sacrilege, or sacrileges, by a good confession, he will become always more and more blind, more and more hardened, like Judas, who no longer heeded the Saviour's admonitions, exhortations and love. After a time neither death, judgment, hell nor Christ's infinite love

can move the unworthy communicant, for he has gradually become obdurate. Many unworthy communicants persevere and die in their sins without repentance! Not a few of them, like Cain and Judas, despair at the hour of death and say like the traitor: "I have sinned by betraying the just blood" (Mat. 27. 4). What a terrible judgment must they not undergo! God will surely require of them the account of the blood of His divine Son: "Behold his blood is required" (Gen. 42. 22). The blood of Jesus, like that of Abel, cries for vengeance against the unworthy communicant, the murderer of his Redeemer! It were no wonder if the deepest part of hell was reserved for such criminals!

If there are any unworthy communicants present, let them not despair, for, however great and numerous their sins, the blood of Jesus still cries out for mercy for the repentant, and will obtain their forgiveness provided they bewail their sins and sincerely confess them and strive to repair the past by a life of fervor in the service of God. As to those who have, with God's grace, always received holy Communion worthily, let them do all in their power to avoid grievous sin and continue to make always a fervent preparation for confession and holy Communion. Finally, let us, by our love for Jesus in the sacrament of His love, endeavor to make some reparation for the outrages He receives therein, especially from those who communicate unworthily! (Exhort to hearing Mass daily, to going even daily to holy Communion, and making a daily visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.)

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

"My delights were (are) to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8. 31).

I. The First and the Most Holy of Devotions.

Its immediate object is Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour Himself, for He is personally in the Sacrament of His love. The same Jesus who was born at Bethlehem in a poor grotto, or stable, and laid in a manger, visited and adored by the shepherds, by the Magi; who walked on water on the Lake of Genesareth, who was transfigured on Thabor, who multiplied the loaves to feed thousands of men, cured the sick, the blind, the deaf and dumb, the lepers, cast out devils, preached His Gospel all over Judea and Galilee, suffered and died on the cross for our salvation. He is present in the Eucharist in His humanity and in His divinity, and is there adored by the angels: "Let all angels adore Him" (Hebr. 1. 5). There can be no doubt of His Real Presence, for He said so: "This *is* My body which shall be delivered for you" (1 Cor. 12. 24), "which is given for you" (Luke 22. 19); and Jesus is "the truth" (John 14. 6), and "hath the words of eternal life" (John 6. 69). Sts. Ambrose and Hilary declare that there can be no doubt about this.

No other devotion can be more holy or more grand since its object is Jesus Christ Himself.

II. This Devotion is Sublime on Account of the Mysteries of the Eucharist.

1. The Eucharist is the wonder of the divine wisdom itself. After spending thirty-three years on earth, Jesus

Christ remains constantly with men on earth in every place; He daily takes in every place new birth by the voice of the priest in the Mass, which is the renewal, the continuation and perpetuation of His sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world. Received daily in holy Communion by an innumerable multitude of the faithful, He dies a mystical death, is laid in the mystical tomb and rises mystically to life again in the virtues and good works of those who partake of His body as their spiritual food, so that each of them can say: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in Me" (Gal. 2. 20), for each has become a member of Christ's mystical body. O wonder of the divine wisdom!

2. It is also a wonder of the divine power, for His living body and blood are really present under the appearances of bread and wine, their substance having been actually changed into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, who is thus really present in heaven and, at the same time, in every Sacred Host in the world.

3. It is a wonder of divine mercy. Jesus therein daily renews in every place His passion and death for the salvation of mankind. He is their constant, their daily Victim to atone for their sins, to procure them salvation. The Eucharist is an inexhaustible torrent of mercy and pardon constantly flowing for sinners.

4. It is a wonder of love. For in the Eucharist Jesus "hath loved us to the end" (John 13. 1); that is, He has loved us so far, that his love can go no further, nor can He bestow on us a greater gift than the Blessed Eucharist, although He is almighty, for He cannot give us anything greater than Himself! He dwells constantly among us, for "My delights are to be with the children of men;" He gives us Himself as the food of our soul and unites Himself to our soul as intimately as our material food becomes united to our body, and He thereby gives us a proof of infinite love and a pledge of life everlasting: "He that eateth this bread shall live forever" (John 6. 59).

III. This Devotion is Most Magnificently Expressed. 1. In the grand ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the first, the greatest and most important act of worship of our holy religion.

2. In the Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, especially the "Forty Hours."

3. In the solemnity of Corpus Christi and its grand Procession.

4. In the grand churches, chapels, altars with their artistic decorations erected for its worship; in the magnificent chalices, monstrances, and altar decorations to adorn the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Neither art, nor time, nor labor, nor expense, nor sacrifices have been spared to honor Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist.

5. And the wonderful devotion and love of the faithful towards our Sacramental Lord!

VISIT TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AND TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

I. Our divine Saviour before ascending to heaven said to His apostles, to His Church: "Behold, I am with you all days until the consummation of ages" (Mat. 28. 20). He kept this promise by remaining with us in the Blessed Sacrament really present on our altars, not only to give Himself to us in holy Communion, but to intercede for us, to receive our visits and to grant us all our prayers. His love for men is so great, that He cannot separate Himself from them: "My delights are to be with the children of men" (Prov. 8. 31). His love for us is so great, that to remain always among us on our altars, He exposes Himself to horrible outrages from unbelievers, heretics, sinners, and even from the irreverence, ingratitude, indifference and neglect of those who boast of their faith, of their love for Him! "It is for us," says Ven. Father Champagnat, "that during nearly nineteen centuries our divine Saviour has remained day and night on our altars, that we may have recourse to Him in all our needs; and nothing so grieves His divine Heart as our indifference to such a favor, our ingratitude towards His boundless love, and our neglect to visit Him and to ask His blessing and the favors we need. If we knew how profitable these visits are, we would never let an opportunity of visiting Him slip by. The saints understood well that Jesus Christ is the source of all grace, and would hasten to visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament in every need, in every difficulty." "It is certain," says St. Alphonsus, "that of all the pious practices there is none, after holy Communion, more agreeable to God and more profitable to us, than to make frequent visits to Jesus Christ

dwelling in our tabernacles. We often obtain more grace in devoutly spending a quarter of an hour before the Blessed Sacrament than in all the other pious devotions we could perform during the whole day."

If we have a very dear friend living near us, we often go to see him, for we like to be with those we love best. But our divine Saviour is our best Friend; no one loves us as much as He; no one has done and suffered for us as much as He. We should, therefore, often visit Him. When you pass a church, or when you have free time, go into the church to greet Him, to give Him proofs of your affection and gratitude. He is always at home and has always time, and is always pleased to listen to you, and is ever ready to grant you favors. He waits for you day and night. He wishes, He desires, He longs that you should come to Him, and greet Him and make known to Him your wants, your troubles. He is more anxious to grant you favors than you are to obtain them. Nowhere can you pray better than before the little tabernacle on the altar in which He dwells. When you enter the church to visit Him, Jesus looks at you with love, for He loves you even more than you can love yourself.

What can you, what ought you to say to Him? "My Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I firmly believe that Thou art really here present in the Blessed Sacrament. Behold I have come to visit Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart. I thank Thee for all that Thou hast done and suffered for me, and for all the numberless benefits Thou hast bestowed upon me. I am exceedingly sorry for having so many times and so grievously offended Thee. O Jesus, forgive me, for I am resolved nevermore to offend Thee and to do all in my power to please Thee, to show Thee my love. I long to receive Thee into my soul, but since I cannot now do so in reality, deign to come spiritually into my heart, and to remain therein to-day and during all my life." Then ask Jesus for all the graces and favors you

desire, with as much simplicity, confidence and love as a little child asks his mother for all that he needs. Before you leave the church, ask Jesus to give you His blessing.

When should you especially visit Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament? When you feel despondent, when your mind is disturbed, when you are sorely tempted, when you feel resentment against some one who has offended you, when you are disturbed by doubts, by remorse for your sins, when some misfortune has happened to you or to those who are very dear to you, when you are ill or in trouble, go to visit Jesus and tell Him all about it and beseech Him to help you in your wants. He is our best Physician, our best Friend, our best Counselor, our true Father, and there is no ill, no trouble which He will not remedy, no want which He will not most bountifully fill. Go to visit Him in all your wants, and you will be astonished and delighted at the good result of your visit. Say to Him as the leper did: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" (Mat. 8. 2). "And thou shalt be as the most obedient son of the Most High, and He will have mercy on thee more than a mother" (Eccli. 4. 11).

Oh, how we should, like the saints, yearn after Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O Lord. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God" (Ps. 41. 2). "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God. (I have found) Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God" (Ps. 83. 2–4). Come and visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Come, "taste and see how sweet the Lord is" (Ps. 33. 9).

"O how sweet a joy it is," says St. Alphonsus, "to remain with faith and tender devotion before an altar, on which our Saviour resides, and converse familiarly with Jesus Christ who is there for the express purpose of lis-

tening to and graciously granting the prayers of those who visit Him! Oh, what a heaven it is to remain there making acts of love to Him who dwells on our altars in order to pray for us to His heavenly Father, and to show His boundless love for us, even when we treat Him with indifference and ingratitude. 'Taste and see how sweet the Lord is.'" (A Protestant lady, hearing that Catholics believe in the Real Presence, remarked: "If I could believe that, I would never leave the church, for I could not tear myself away from our Lord!")

II. Visit to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

St. Alphonsus recommends and exhorts us to make every day a visit to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In his admirable book of Visits to the Blessed Sacrament for every day in the month, he adds to each Visit a short Visit to Our Lady, for he says we cannot separate Jesus from Mary, nor Mary from Jesus. Jesus is the Author of grace, the Fountain of grace, but Mary is the channel of grace, the Dispensatrix, the Distributress of grace. Jesus Christ redeemed us and, as His last will, made her our spiritual Mother and us her spiritual children. She is then the Mother of the "redeemed" as well as of the Redeemer, and hers is the office of distributing the graces of the Redemption to the "redeemed." She is the best of mothers. She thinks more and cares more about us and our wants than we do ourselves, and is ever ready to help us. Let us, therefore, after visiting Jesus in the Sacrament of His love, pay a visit to our most loving and tender Mother, and after greeting her and thanking her for all she has done for us, let us beg her to obtain from Jesus by her all-powerful intercession, all the graces and favors we need, especially a daily increase in the love we owe Jesus and herself, and, as she is the Mother of perseverance, also that most inestimable and precious of graces, the grace of final perseverance.

THE FORTY HOURS' EXPOSITION

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things which He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. 115. 12).

How grateful was David to God for His benefits! God had protected him against his enemies and delivered him from them; He had made him king over His chosen people and promised him that the ardently expected Redeemer would be one of his descendants. But what should be our gratitude towards our divine Saviour, who has loved us with infinite love, who died a most painful and ignominious death to redeem us from sin and the eternal punishments we deserve! "Greater love than this no man hath, than that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15. 13). And Jesus laid down His life for us who, far from being His friends, had offended and outraged Him by our sins! And not content with dying for us, His love for us induced Him to institute the Blessed Eucharist, that He might not only always remain with us, but give Himself to us as the food of our soul, and that we might thus become most intimately united with Him and thereby be made, as St. Peter declares, "partakers of the divine nature." Hence He can truly say: "What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Is. 5. 4). In fact, although He is almighty, He cannot do more for us than He has done, for He cannot give us anything greater than Himself. The greatness of the gift depends

I. First, on THE DIGNITY OF THE GIVER. How great, powerful, good and perfect is the Giver of the Blessed Eucharist! How holy, compassionate, considerate, merci-

ful, loving and lovable! The least gift from such a Giver is precious beyond all estimation and deserving of being most ardently desired and eagerly sought for.

II. How Excellent and Sublime the Gift! Nothing more precious, so much so, that even God cannot give us a greater gift! How ardent and tender and boundless the love that induced our divine Saviour to bestow such a Gift on us, wretched, ungrateful sinners! "Having loved His own, who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13. 1). "He poured forth, as it were," says the Council of Trent, "the riches of His love." "The Blessed Eucharist," says St. Thomas, "is the abridgment of God's wonders and the standing monument of His miracles." Hence we can truly exclaim with the royal psalmist: "Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods nigh unto them, as our God is present to us" (Deut. 4. 7).

III. Thirdly, On Whom Has God Bestowed so Wonderful and Excellent a Gift? On our misery and wretchedness, on our guilt, on our ingratitude! "He hath not done likewise to every nation" (Ps. 147. 20). And for what object? That He might invite us in all our misery: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Mat. 11. 28). He remains constantly among us, first, in order to receive our visits and grant us all that we need, both spiritually and corporally; to console us in our trials, to strengthen our weakness, to forgive and blot out our sins, to impart to us His love. Secondly, to feed our souls with His very flesh and blood, so that we may become most intimately united to Him, to make us partakers of His virtues and power, as He did the martyrs, the holy penitents, and all His saints!

Why are not such effects produced in us? We are cold and indifferent, wanting in love for Jesus, in ardent desire to receive Him in holy Communion; we receive Him too

seldom, with hardly any preparation or thanksgiving; we are slothful and afraid of making the necessary efforts to correspond with His love, with His graces! Oh, if we had a lively faith, how we would long for holy Communion! One holy Communion is of greater value than the whole universe. In the Blessed Eucharist Jesus shows how ardently He desires that we be united to Him in holy Communion by the great promises of life everlasting to those who *eat* (that is, frequently) His flesh and drink His blood, and how He threatens those who do not or will not eat His flesh and drink His blood, with being deprived of eternal life!

None of your vain excuses, or rather pretexts, for, says the Holy Ghost, "He that hath a mind to depart from a friend, seeketh occasions" (Prov. 18. 1). Jesus Christ is our loving Saviour, Brother, Friend and Physician, our very Food!

Fourthly, Jesus Christ has given us in the Blessed Eucharist a daily and perpetual sacrifice of infinite value to atone for our sins, to obtain for us all the graces we need, to discharge all our debts to God, to commemorate and apply to our soul the merits and fruits of His passion and death. (See Sermon on the Real Presence.)

HOMILY FOR CORPUS CHRISTI

"My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the Bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this Bread, shall live forever" (John 6. 56–59).

Our divine Saviour had fed five thousand men with only five loaves of bread, and for this the people had sought to proclaim Him king. But Jesus retired to a neighboring mountain to spend most of the night in prayer, whilst His apostles, by His order, were crossing the lake in a boat. The night became stormy and they had much difficulty in making their way to Capharnaum. Towards morning, whilst they were rowing with all their might, they saw Jesus walking on the sea coming towards them. They were at first frightened, thinking it was a ghost. St. Peter said: "If it is Thou, O Lord, tell me to come to Thee." Ordered to do so by Jesus, St. Peter walked on the sea towards Him, but frightened by a big wave, began to sink. But Jesus saved him and reproached him for his want of faith. Then Jesus and Peter entered the boat, and in a few moments they landed at Capharnaum. The people who had made their way overland, on arriving at that city in the afternoon, were greatly astonished at seeing Jesus there before them, for thought they, He went up the mountain and His disciples took the only boat there; hence He could not have crossed the lake, and He was still on the mountain when we started for Capharnaum; how then did He get here before us? They flocked around Him. He

rebuked them for coming to Him chiefly because He had multiplied the five loaves to feed them. Then they reminded Him how Moses had fed their ancestors for forty years in the desert with bread from heaven, and asked Him to feed them also as Moses had done. "Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say to you; Moses gave you not bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven. . . . I am the Bread of life. . . . The Jews murmured at Him, because He had said: I am the living Bread which came down from heaven." Our divine Saviour repeated His assertion, saying: "I am the Bread of life. . . . I am the living Bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever; and the Bread which I will give, is My flesh for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6).

Jesus repeated ten or twelve times that His flesh or body is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed, that is, not corporal food or drink, but spiritual food and drink for the soul, since the eating and drinking thereof would directly confer only spiritual gifts, life everlasting and a glorious resurrection. The words of our divine Saviour, so often repeated and insisted upon in reply to the objections of some of His hearers, are not a figure of speech, but are to be understood literally, especially since He expressly said: "The Bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." The flesh or body which He gave or sacrificed on the cross for the life, the redemption, the salvation and the everlasting life of the world, was not a

figurative flesh or body, but His own real flesh, His very body.

The flesh or body of Jesus Christ is a very wholesome, spiritually sanctifying and nourishing food for the living, that is, for those who are in the state of grace. To spiritual corpses it is spiritual death and condemnation, that is, for those who receive it in the state of sin. To the spiritually sick, that is, the tepid, it does not profit much, on account of their carelessness and lack of fervent desire and love. It yields but little fruit to the good who make only a hasty and careless preparation. It is a very pleasant and strengthening nourishment for those who are not filled with pride, vanity and similar defects. As for those who eat it often and with relish, it is a powerful, invigorating food, and makes them partakers of the life and virtues of Jesus Christ, for He says: "He that eateth My flesh (note the present tense which denotes a habit) and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him." These words of our Saviour clearly indicate His Real Presence in the Eucharist. Our corporal food is changed into our body, for it is less noble than our body. But in holy Communion, the food of our soul, it is just the reverse, for the body and blood of Jesus Christ is immeasurably more noble than our soul, and therefore in holy Communion we are changed more or less into Jesus Christ according to our dispositions and our co-operation. Hence after a good and fervent holy Communion, we may, in some manner, say with St. Paul: "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2. 20).

The Jews having, by their objections, manifested that they took His words about eating His flesh in a material sense, as a mere corporal food; Jesus Christ corrected their erroneous view by saying: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6. 64). If the Eucharist were not the very flesh and blood of Jesus Christ the spirit-

ual food of our soul, but merely a little bread and wine, He would not have said that His words were spirit and life, that is, that they designated a purely spiritual and eternal life-giving food. We can draw the same conclusion from these other words of our divine Saviour: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." Here our Saviour clearly tells us that he who eats Him, not as a corporal food, but as his soul's food, shall live by Jesus Himself, not his corporal life, for he has corporal life already, but a spiritual life, a life of grace which will enable him to save his soul. This is another proof of the Real Presence. In holy Communion a union is formed between the communicant and our Saviour somewhat similar to that between the Divine Word and the human nature in the mystery of the Incarnation. By means of holy Communion we are so intimately united with the Son of God as to "be made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1. 4), in some manner, as the Prince of the apostles calls it. Thus the Blessed Eucharist imparts to us a new life and so ennobles us, that we may say after holy Communion: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

The Blessed Eucharist is also most intimately connected with the perfect donation, with the sacrifice our divine Saviour made of Himself by dying on the cross for the salvation of mankind in the work of the Redemption. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the commemoration, the renewal, the perpetuation and the application of Christ's sacrifice on the cross to mankind throughout all ages to the end of the world.

Let us be thankful for the ineffable gift of the Blessed Eucharist, and show our gratitude for it by making a good use of it. In the first place, let us assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass not only on Sundays and Holydays of obligation, but also daily, if possible; let us receive holy Communion, after due preparation and with a lively faith

and an ardent desire, often and even daily, if possible; let us always behave with due reverence in church, where Jesus Christ personally dwells day and night in the Holy Eucharist; and whenever we can, let us pay a visit to Jesus in the tabernacle, for He is our best Friend and is ever ready to help us in our wants, to console us in our afflictions, to strengthen us in temptation and to impart to us every grace, if we are willing to come to Him and ask them of Him. "Come to Me," He says, "all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Mat. 11. 28). In the Blessed Eucharist Jesus has to suffer much from men, and has, perhaps, already suffered much from us, through irreverence, unbelief, through horrid desecration and profanation of His body in the Sacred Hosts, through sacrilegious communions! Let us endeavor to make some atonement for these numberless crimes by our love and fervor in visiting Him, in receiving Him in holy Communion, in devoutly hearing Mass.

We are all happy when a priest, or a bishop, gives us his blessing; even careless Catholics devoutly kneel down to receive it. What is the reason of this? Because the priest, the bishop, is a representative of Jesus Christ. Now in this parish we often have the happiness of receiving the blessing of Jesus Christ Himself. And yet comparatively few avail themselves of this great privilege! For instance: At divine service on every Sunday afternoon or evening, the priest accompanied by the altar boys comes to the altar, which is decorated with flowers and resplendent with lights. He ascends the altar, opens the tabernacle and exposes between the lights and over the tabernacle our divine Saviour in the golden monstrance. The organ peals forth its melodious sounds; the priest and the altar boys are kneeling on the altar steps, and all present, both old and young, are adoring and praying to their Saviour and Redeemer, their Lord and God, their heavenly King. And from His throne our Saviour looks down, like a king, on His devout sub-

jects. How solemn and cheerful is it then in the house of God! How devoutly are the hymns sung! How all present pray from their inmost heart! Yes, for God Himself is there! Hence those who really love Him come to Him from far and near to visit Him, to adore Him, to thank Him, to implore His favors, to make known to Him their troubles, their wants and seek relief. At the end of the service the priest holding in his hands Jesus Christ in the monstrance gives the blessing of Jesus Christ Himself to all present, who receive their Saviour's blessing with bowed heads, strike their breasts and make the sign of the cross with sentiments of a lively faith, confidence and love.

(If necessary, exhort the people to a better attendance at Benediction.)

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

"I am come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled?" (Luke 12. 49).

This fire is the fire of divine love, which consumes in our heart all attachment to creatures, all sinfulness and imperfection. Jesus Christ wills that our hearts should be inflamed with divine love. To fill them with this holy and saving love, He multiplied miracles of love towards us in His Incarnation, in His humble birth, in His hidden life of prayer and poverty and submission to His creatures, in His ministry of labor and hardship and persecution, in His sufferings, passion and cruel and ignominious death, and in the Blessed Eucharist.

His Heart was opened on the cross, that the thoughts and love of many might be manifested. His Sacred Heart it was that prompted Him to give us such wonderful manifestations of His boundless love for us. His Heart, in fact, was and is the seat of His love towards us. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, though not universal in the Church until a few centuries ago, was practised in all ages by the Doctors of the Church and her greatest saints, such as Sts. Augustine, Bernard, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Mechtilde, Gertrude, Catharine of Siena and others. In the year 1675 Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, whilst praying before the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar, beheld therein our Lord Jesus Christ showing her His Sacred Heart as on a fiery throne, encircled by a crown of thorns, surmounted by a cross, as a testimony that He had freely suffered the torments of His passion out of love for mankind. He said to her, that He

willed that this representation of His Heart should be made known to men, and promised great graces to all who would practise devotion to His Sacred Heart. And He also designated, for the celebration in the Church of a special Feast in honor of His Sacred Heart, the Friday following the octave of Corpus Christi in reparation of all the insults, outrages and profanations offered to the Blessed Eucharist. This devotion soon spread rapidly and saved the world from the cursed spirit of Jansenism, which aimed at extinguishing in men's hearts all love for Jesus Christ. In accordance with the declared wish of our Saviour, the Jesuits were foremost in spreading this devotion.

The object of this devotion is Jesus Christ, the Man-God, our Saviour; and more especially His interior, loving affection for us, in order to induce us to love Him in return, and to repair the insults and outrages offered by mankind to Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of His love.

Motives for This Devotion.

1. We are commanded by the first commandment to love God with our whole heart. The heart is the seat of love. The heart of man cannot be without love. The Heart of Jesus is the seat of His infinite love for us. It is represented in pictures as pouring out flames of love for us. Let us, therefore, love this Heart and, through it, Jesus Christ Himself.

2. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a most sublime model for us. All who wish to be saved should take it as their model, for, says St. Paul, "whom God foreknew, He also predestinated to be made comformable to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8. 29). Goodness and wickedness, as our divine Saviour says, proceed from the heart: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies." The Heart of Jesus is, then, the source of all holiness. Let us, therefore, love the Heart of Jesus, our model of holiness.

"Learn of Me," He says, "because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. 11. 29).

3. The infinite grandeurs of the Sacred Heart. It is most intimately and inseparably connected with the Saviour's body, soul and divinity and, through His divinity, indirectly with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Hence devotion to the Sacred Heart includes devotion to Jesus Christ Himself, and indirectly to the Blessed Trinity.

4. Jesus Himself desires that we should acknowledge and venerate His Sacred Heart as the seat of His love for us, as He declared to Blessed Margaret Mary. He promised many great graces and favors to all who would honor His Sacred Heart.

5. The corruption of the world. How ungrateful the majority of mankind are towards God! How greatly do sins and crimes of all kinds abound in the world! It would seem as if men were vying with one another as to which of them could offend God the most! Wherefore it behooves us Catholics to make reparation, as far as in us lies, for the crimes of mankind, to the grieved and wounded loving Heart of Jesus! Let us be His true friends in this. A true friend always sympathizes with his sorrowing and aggrieved friend by redoubling the testimonies of his love and affection.

6. The Heart of Jesus is a true human heart. Jesus Christ most affectionately sympathizes with us, for He considers us as His brethren. For, says St. Paul, "we have not a High-Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things as we are, without sin. Let us, therefore, go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (Hebr. 4. 15, 16).

Let us study the Heart of Jesus so that we may learn how to practise the virtues, especially humility, patience, meekness, resignation, conformity to the divine will, purity, and compassion, love and zeal for our neighbor. Let us,

moreover, have recourse with confidence to His Sacred Heart and ask for our own hearts the purifying and consuming fire of divine love, so that we may love on earth Him whom we desire to love in eternity. Amen.

IV. SERIES OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

PENANCE, A DIVINELY INSTITUTED SACRAMENT

"Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13. 5).

These words of our divine Saviour prove the absolute necessity of penance for salvation. Penance may be considered either as a mere virtue or also as a sacrament. As a virtue it is necessary for all men who have attained the age of discretion and committed sin. It is man's atonement for his sin. There are only two roads to heaven, that of innocence and that of penance. As a sacrament penance is necessary to all who, after baptism, have committed grievous sin. Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of penance when He empowered His Church to forgive the sins of men, for as we read in the Gospel, He transmitted to her all the powers He had received from His heavenly Father for their salvation.

During His ministry on earth the Saviour both claimed and exercised the power of forgiving sins. We read the following in the second chapter (v. 1–12) of St. Mark's Gospel: "And again Jesus entered into Capharnaum after some days. And it was heard that He was in the house, and many came together, so that there was no room; no, not even at the door; and He spoke to them the word. And they came to Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, who was carried by four. And when they could not offer him unto Him for the multitude, they uncovered the roof where He was; and opening it, they let down the bed wherein the sick man of the palsy lay. And when Jesus had seen their faith, He said to the sick of the palsy:

Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And there were some of the scribes sitting there, and thinking in their hearts: Why doth this man speak thus? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only? Which Jesus presently knowing in His spirit, that they so thought within themselves, saith to them: Why think you these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy: Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy): I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house. And immediately he arose; and taking up his bed, went his way in the sight of all, so that all wondered and glorified God, saying: We never saw the like." St. Luke relates (7. 36–50) how Jesus forgave the sins of the penitent Magdalen, and also those of the penitent thief by promising him paradise (23. 40–43).

Jesus needed the power to forgive men's sins, for He came on earth to save sinners, and He could not save them without that power. But He only began the work of saving sinners, for that work He intended should be continued and accomplished by His Church, by His apostles and their successors. This we learn from the Gospel of St. John (20. 19–23). "When it was late that same day (the very day of His resurrection), and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: Peace be to you. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." From this passage of St. Luke we learn that Jesus sent the apostles

and endowed them with the same power of forgiving sins which He Himself had received from His heavenly Father: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." That He actually intended to give them that power cannot be questioned, for He immediately breathed on them and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This breathing of Jesus on His apostles had a deep meaning. We read in Genesis that God had made the body of the first man out of clay; but the body was lifeless. How did God impart life to it? God breathed into it a soul, and thus imparted life to it and made it what it was not before His breathing, that is, a human body. Now on the night of Easter Sunday, Jesus Christ, the divine Saviour, also breathed on the apostles, and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." By His breathing Jesus imparted to His apostles a hidden, mysterious power, which they did not previously possess; He imparted the Holy Ghost to them, and this for a special purpose, which He expressed in these words: "Whose sins you shall forgive" etc. (See above.) Why should the apostles then receive the Holy Ghost, who enlightens, directs, counsels and strengthens, unless they would need Him to enlighten, direct, counsel and strengthen them in the discharge of the new, superhuman office which Jesus was now entrusting to them? Why would Jesus Christ perform this ceremony and say these words, unless He actually meant what He so plainly said and actually conferred thereby on His apostles judicial power over the sins of men? If Jesus actually intended to make them judges of men's sins, could he have used plainer words than those He then uttered? If Jesus did not really mean to empower the apostles, He could not have spoken thus, unless He intended to deceive them! But to suppose this is a horrible blasphemy against Him who is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14. 6). Jesus, therefore, actually conferred on the apostles, by these words, the power of remitting and retaining men's sins. And, as He sent the apostles with the

same powers He had received from His Father, He empowered them, His successors in the salvation of mankind, also to transmit the power of forgiving sins to their successors, that is, to the Catholic Church.

The Church exercises this power, in the first place, for the benefit of those who are to become her members by administering to them the Sacrament of baptism, by which they are made Christians, children of God and members of God's Church, the holy Catholic Church. Let us bear in mind that all who are validly baptized become thereby members of the one true, Catholic and apostolic Church, for, St. Paul says, as there is only "one Lord, one faith," so also there is but "one baptism" (Eph. 4. 5). It was His own Church, and no other, that Jesus Christ commissioned to preach His Gospel and to baptize those who would believe her preaching. Hence it is through the Church that baptism remits original sin and all the sins previously committed by those who are validly baptized.

Furthermore, the Church cannot perform her mission of saving mankind, unless she also possesses the power of forgiving the sins of those who are already her members, that is, the sins committed after baptism. All men are sinners. St. John the Evangelist, the apostle of charity, brands as a liar him who boasts of being sinless. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him (God) a liar" (1 John 1. 8, 10). Now, if all men are sinners, how can the Church save her own members, if she does not possess the power to remove, blot out and forgive their sins, which alone prevent their salvation and exclude them from heaven? If she does not possess this power, of what benefit would she be to her own members, since she could not save them? If, by baptism, she can forgive all the sins previously committed by those who were not yet her members, her children, why should she not have the same power in favor of her own children who have

fallen into sin after their baptism? But Jesus Christ instituted His Church for the salvation of *all* mankind and, therefore, He must have given her the power to forgive the sins of all men, and He actually gave it to her the very night of the day of His resurrection in the clearest terms, as we have just seen.

The Church has, from her very foundation, exercised this power in behalf of her own children in the sacrament of penance. Our forefathers went to confession; theirs also. If confession was not in force during the life-time of the apostles, it must have been introduced at some later date. But no time, no date, no place, no author of the introduction of confession can be mentioned or even surmised. But if such an introduction had been made posterior to the apostles, what an uproar such a novelty would have caused, especially since, as history proves by numberless facts, everything concerning the faith, and even non-essential points of discipline, was so jealously guarded in the early ages of the Church.

If confession had been a mere human invention, who would have stood it so long, and how could it have been so universally practised? Even the clergy would have sought not only to exempt themselves from going to confession, but also to render the hearing of confessions far less burdensome than it has proved to them. Arduous, indeed, is the labor of hearing the confessions not only of great crowds of penitents, but also of persons infected with contagious and repulsive diseases, especially during epidemics.

Our divine Saviour has made the reception of holy Communion obligatory on all, "Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John 6. 54). And St. Paul says: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11. 27–29). St. Paul requires that we be in the state of grace to receive holy Communion worthily, and that if we are not or have reason to doubt whether we are in the state of grace, we must prove ourselves, that is, recover the state of grace, so that when we receive holy Communion we should be morally certain of our being worthy and thus avoid the frightful crime of profaning the Lord's body and blood and eating our own condemnation. Had not Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of penance for the remission of sins, we and all the members of God's Church would find ourselves in a terrible dilemma; for, on the one hand, we dare not neglect receiving holy Communion, lest we be excluded from life everlasting, from God's heavenly kingdom; and, on the other hand, we dare not receive holy Communion without first proving ourselves, without freeing ourselves from our sins, lest we be guilty of a frightful sacrilege and eating our own condemnation. If we have not the sacrament of penance to remit our sins, how shall we obtain God's forgiveness? We may repeatedly implore God's forgiveness, and yet we cannot, on account of this, have a *moral certainty* that He has forgiven us, for does not our divine Saviour say, "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven"? (Mat. 7. 21). And unless we have such a certainty, we cannot receive holy Communion without exposing ourselves to the danger of profaning the body and blood of Jesus Christ. But since Jesus Christ insists on our eating His flesh and drinking His blood as a necessary and indispensable means of salvation, He, knowing our weakness, our sinfulness, must have given us the means of obtaining, with moral certainty, the forgiveness of our sins. This He has done by instituting the sacrament of penance. This sacrament being, like the other sacraments, a visible sign of grace, affords us a moral certainty or proof

of God's forgiveness of the sins of those who confess their sins with the due dispositions. Therefore, whoever is sincerely sorry for his sins and confesses them as well as he can and receives the priest's absolution, or forgiveness, can be morally certain that God has forgiven his sins, and that he can worthily receive Holy Communion.

"The conversion of a sinner to justice, that is, to a good life," says St. John Chrysostom, "is a greater miracle than the raising of a dead man to life." A daily experience in the Church is that sinners, inveterate sinners, are converted by means of confession, of the sacrament of penance. Drunkards thereby become sober men; the revengeful forgive their enemies and are reconciled with them; the miserly become generous; the impure begin to lead a chaste life, the worldly-minded, the lovers of pleasure, become pious and mortified. Such effects are and can be only God's work; therefore, the instrument of these wonders, that is, confession, must be of truly divine origin.

Hundreds of thousands, nay, millions of priests, since the apostolic times, have heard confessions, and there is not one well authenticated fact or example of a direct violation of the seal of confession, but many examples of Catholic priests having undergone imprisonment, tortures and other sufferings, and even capital punishment to preserve the inviolability of the seal of confession. (St. John Nepomuck in Bohemia; Bl. John Sarcander, parish priest of Holeschau, in the diocese of Olmütz, in 1620; Father Garnet, S.J., hung in London in 1606, on account of the "Gunpowder Plot;" Father Weinzaepfle, in Indiana penitentiary for many years about the middle of the 19th century; Father Dumoulin, for many years in penitentiary in France in the latter half of the 19th century. These latter two, falsely accused of murder, could have freed themselves from the charge by making known the real culprits, known to them only through sacramental confession. Each of the real culprits, when on the point of death, confessed his crime

openly, and the priests were consequently liberated. There are a number of similar examples on record in other countries.) These examples prove that there is a special Providence of God over the sacredness and inviolability of the seal of confession. No merely natural explanation can account for this. These examples, moreover, confirm the teaching of the Church concerning the divine institution of the sacrament of penance.

By conferring on the priesthood the power of forgiving and retaining men's sins, Jesus Christ necessarily instituted the priests as judges of men's sins. But a judge cannot properly exercise the functions of his office without examining and sifting every case. Jesus Christ, being God, could read the heart of every man thoroughly and properly decide his case without previous investigation. But the priests, being only human, do not possess this gift, for it is not necessary for them, since it can be supplied by the sinner declaring or confessing his sins and manifesting his dispositions concerning them. And, indeed, we should thank God for not having given to every priest the power of reading men's hearts, for, had He done so, we should dread meeting or appearing before a priest!

Wherefore it behooves the sinner to make known to the priest at least the grievous sins he has committed in their kind and number, and to manifest his sincere sorrow for them, his resolution to avoid in future them and their occasions, and to repair the injury he may have thereby caused to his neighbor, so that the priest may be able rightly to judge whether he is deserving of having his sins forgiven. This is confession as practised in the Catholic Church from apostolic times, from her very foundation. "Confess your sins," says St. James (5. 6), "to one another," to a man like yourself, but not any man whatever, but to one duly empowered, like the apostles, to forgive sins.

In the Acts of the Apostles we read that at Ephesus the

devil severely beat some Jewish exorcists who tried to cast him out of a possessed man. "This became known to all the Jews and Gentiles that dwelt at Ephesus, and fear fell on them all . . . and many that believed (that is, Christians) came confessing and declaring their deeds (sins). And many of them who had followed curious arts, brought together their books and burnt them before all; and counting the price of them, they found them to be worth fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19. 17–19). This is an authentic example of confession among the early Christians and of one of its results, the burning of bad books.

The New Testament makes but little mention of the practice of confession, because all the early Christians, being converts from either Judaism or paganism, on becoming Christians, had no need of confession, but only of baptism, for the remission of their sins. In the early Church confession was made both in private and in public. Private confession of all grievous sins at least was made then as now; but the sins that had been publicly committed or been followed by public scandal, had to be confessed and atoned for in public. As I have already remarked, if the sacrament of penance had not been instituted by Christ and put into practice by the apostles themselves, it could not have been introduced and made obligatory later on, without meeting with universal opposition as a novelty and an intolerable burden, and would have left in history a visible and unmistakable trace of its origin. But no such trace can be found or indicated, for, from the very origin of the Church the practice of confession has been in force, especially as the proper means of "proving oneself," according to St. Paul's directions, before receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The testimony of the ancient Fathers and writers of the Church is unanimous on this point.

1. St. Barnaby in his epistle says: "Confess your sins."

2. St. Clement, Pope, in his second epistle to the Corinthians says: "Let us, whilst we are in this world, atone for the sins we have committed in our body, that we may be saved by God, whilst we have time for penance; for, after our departure from this world, we can no longer confess or do penance." In an ancient epistle attributed by some to the same saint we read: "If perchance some anger, or unfaithfulness, or some other evil has, in a hidden manner, crept into some one's heart, he should not be ashamed to confess it to him who presides, that he may, by his whole faith and good works, escape the torments of the eternal fire."

3. St. Irineus (Adv. haer. l. 1. c. 9) mentions the public confessions made after their conversion by certain Christian women who had been duped by heresiarchs. In l. 3. c. 4 he says of the heresiarch Cerdo: "At one time he taught his errors in secret; at other times he would go to confession," to deceive the people.

4. Tertullian in De Poenit. c. 9 says: "The confession of sins loosens them as much as their concealment aggravates them. The proving of ourselves is done not merely by our conscience, but is performed by an external act called confession." In c. 10 he says: "I believe that many evade or defer making their confession from day to day, for they are more mindful of their shame than of their salvation, just as some, who are afflicted with a secret disease, avoid manifesting it to their physician, and thus perish because of their shame. Thus you see how profitable (?) is the concealment of sin through shame! Forsooth, if we conceal something from the knowledge of men, shall we be able to conceal it from God? Is it preferable to be damned without appearing guilty to men, than to be publicly absolved? . . . If you neglect confessing your sins because you find it difficult to do so, reflect seriously on hell, which confession will extinguish for you. Therefore, since you know that, after the first protection of bap-

tism, there remains in confession a second protection against hell, why do you forsake this necessary means of salvation?"

5. ORIGEN (Hom. 2 in Ps. 37) says: "Behold what Scripture teaches us, that we should not conceal our sins within us, for like those whose stomach contains indigested food, they feel sick and as if suffocated by its humors; but when they have cast them up in confession, they feel relieved of all their interior remorse and suffering. You should carefully choose the confessor to whom you may in all confidence lay open your conscience." In Hom. 2. in Levit. he says: "Now comes the difficult and laborious remission of sins through penance, in which the sinner is not ashamed to declare his sin to the priest." Elsewhere he says: "If we manifest our sins, not to God only, but also to those who are empowered to heal our wounds and sins, our sins shall be blotted out."

6. ST. CYPRIAN in his Treatise *De Lapsis* says: "Those who are not defiled by the crime of offering sacrifice to the false gods, or of having procured a certificate of such a sacrifice, are so much the greater by their faith. Yet those who merely thought of doing this (that is, intended to do this), should unburden their conscience and disclose (that is, confess) the weight that interiorly oppresses them and sincerely and sorrowfully confess such thought or intention to the priest of God, for they know well that they cannot safely deceive God, since Scripture says: God is not mocked. Those, indeed, sin more grievously who, looking upon God as merely human, imagine they can escape being punished for their crime, so long as they were not guilty of external sin. Every one is bound to confess his sin during life, whilst his confession is admissible and the priest's absolution and his own satisfaction are still acceptable by God."

7. LACTANTIUS says (Inst. l. 4, c. 17): "God, by prescribing circumcision to the Jews, ordered the shameful

parts of the body to be laid bare, in order thereby to admonish us not to conceal our shameful deeds in the secret recesses of our conscience. This is the circumcision of the heart mentioned by the prophet, for God has transferred circumcision from the mortal flesh to the immortal soul. Desiring, in His eternal goodness towards us, to secure our life and salvation, He proposed penance to us in this circumcision, so that, by laying bare our hearts (that is, confessing our sins) and satisfying God's justice, we may obtain the forgiveness denied to the contumacious and to those who conceal their sins from Him, who beholds not merely the face, as men do, but even the inmost secrets in the conscience." In c. 3 he says: "The Catholic Church alone retains the true worship of God. But since all sectarians claim to be true Christians, and that their church is the Catholic Church, all men should know that the true Church is that Church in which confession and penance are practised as the wholesome cure of sin and of the wounds to which the weakness of the human flesh is subject."

8. St. Basil (Reg. Brev. 288) says: "Men must necessarily disclose (that is, confess) their sins to those to whom is entrusted the dispensation of God's (the divine) mysteries."

9. St. Gregory of Nyssa says: "Courageously manifest to the priest what is concealed. Lay bare to him the secrets of your conscience as you would your hidden sores to the physician."

(A brief recapitulation with the conclusion that the sacrament is of divine institution and the necessity of confessing all grievous sins committed after baptism.)

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

1. PENANCE IS A SACRAMENT, because it possesses all the requisites of a sacrament. First, it is an outward sign; the sins confessed are its remote matter, or removable matter; the penitent's confession and contrition are the proximate matter, and the priest's absolution is its form. Secondly, it imparts inward grace, the pardon of the sins duly confessed. Thirdly, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of penance the very night of the day of His resurrection (John 20. 19–21; see foregoing sermon). The bishop or priest, as successor of the apostles, is the minister of this sacrament. The subject or fit recipient is a baptized adult who has committed actual sin since his baptism.

2. THE EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE are: 1, the forgiveness of the sins duly confessed; 2, either the restoration to the penitent of the sanctifying grace he had lost through mortal sin, or its increase in those who had not lost it; 3, the remission of the eternal punishment due to mortal sin; 4, the probable restoration of the merits the penitent had acquired previously to his mortal sin; 5, strength to avoid sin and persevere in sanctifying grace; 6, restoration of peace of mind and a quiet conscience; 7, the preservation of good order, peace and justice.

3. THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE. To receive the forgiveness of our sins through the sacrament of penance, we must confess our sins to a priest. (See preceding sermon.) But we cannot confess or tell our sins to the priest, unless we know them. We must, therefore, previously examine our conscience. This we should do as follows: 1, pray to the Holy Ghost to enlighten us, that we may discover, or remember the sins we are to confess; we may add

a Hail Mary to the Blessed Virgin and an invocation to our guardian angel to help us to make a good confession; 2, in the next place, we ask ourselves when we made our *last good* confession; if we find out that our last confession was not a good one, either because we wilfully concealed a mortal sin or minimized it into a venial sin, or confessed without due sorrow, or for some other reason, we should examine how many bad confessions we have made since our last good confession, and whether we have during that time received any other sacraments; 3, after this we proceed to examine what grievous sins we have committed since our last good confession against the commandments of God and of the Church, and how many times we have committed each of said mortal sins. The examination should be very carefully made, if it extends over a long space of time. The examination and confession of venial sins, however useful and recommendable, is not required or necessary, for such sins may be forgiven by an act of love of God, or of contrition, or some other virtue or a penitential work, without going to confession.

4. Contrition. Having found out the state of our conscience, that is, the sins with which it is burdened, we should awaken in our heart sincere contrition or sorrow for them. Contrition is the most important part of the sacrament of penance, and is the indispensable condition of obtaining the forgiveness of our sins; its place can never be supplied. It is more necessary for the baptized in the state of mortal sin than baptism is for the unbaptized; the latter, when dying without the opportunity of receiving baptism, may be saved by an ardent desire of receiving baptism, accompanied with sincere sorrow for the grievous sins they had previously committed. But a Catholic in the state of mortal sin who would confess all his sins most minutely, were it even to the Pope, cannot obtain forgiveness unless he is sincerely sorry for his sins, for God will

never forgive an unrepentant sinner, because He is infinitely just.

Contrition consists not in mere words, or feelings, nor merely in exterior signs, such as striking the breast, shedding tears. Its necessary qualities are: 1, interior, or sincere; that is, it must be really meant and come from the heart; 2, supernatural in its motive; that is, it must have reference to God, such as the love of God, God's goodness, the loss of heaven, the punishment of hell, the Passion of Jesus Christ; 3, universal, that is, we must be sorry for *all* our mortal sins, or, if we have only venial sins to confess, we must be sorry, at least, for one kind of the venial sins we confess; 4, sovereign, that is, we must be more sorry for our sins than for any natural evil that may happen to us. We may *feel* some temporal evil more than the sorrow we have for our sins; this does not show that our contrition is not sovereign, for true contrition resides not in our feelings, but in our will; if we are sincerely resolved not to offend God for anything that might happen to us in the world, it is a sure sign that our contrition is sovereign.

Contrition is of two kinds: perfect contrition and imperfect contrition. We have perfect contrition when its motive is only God Himself; for instance, if the reason why we are sorry for our sins is because we have thereby offended God who is infinitely perfect, or infinitely good in Himself and therefore deserving of all our love, of our obedience, this is perfect contrition, for there is nothing selfish in this motive. "The motive of perfect contrition is the love of God above all," says 'Lanslots (Catholic Theology, p. 298), "that is, the love of God for Himself, for His own sake, not for us, nor for our sake, accompanied by the hatred of sin as opposed to His infinite goodness. . . . If God is the motive of our contrition, it is perfect; if anything else outside of God moves us to it, it

is imperfect contrition or, as the theologians call it, attrition. The (Baltimore) Catechism gives three motives for imperfect contrition; the loss of heaven, the fear of hell and the hatefulness of sin." Other motives, such as God's goodness towards us, our ingratitude towards God. The effect of perfect contrition is to justify man immediately, that is, to obtain the forgiveness of his sins, even before confession; but in order to do this, it should, at least implicitly, include the desire of receiving the sacrament of penance, that is, of going to confession. He who has thus obtained the forgiveness of his mortal sins, is, nevertheless, bound to confess them in his next confession; should he wilfully neglect doing so, his confessions would thenceforth be sacrilegious for neglecting the precept of confessing, at least, all his mortal sins. *Imperfect* contrition alone does not suffice, not even at the hour of death, to obtain the forgiveness of mortal sins, but when it accompanies a good confession and the priest's absolution, the penitent's grievous sins are surely remitted. We should endeavor, especially when going to confession, to make acts of perfect contrition.

5. The Firm Purpose of Amendment, that is, of sinning no more, is essential to true contrition, to a good confession. It is a firm resolution to avoid in future all mortal sins confessed and their proximate occasions. Just as it does not suffice to destroy the cobweb, we must also kill the spider in order to get rid of cobwebs altogether; so also if we really intend to sin no more, we must shun the proximate occasions of sin, that is, those persons, those places, those things that always lead us into sin, whenever we frequent them. We must keep away from bad company, from dangerous or sinful amusements, destroy bad books whether against faith or against morals. Moreover, he who has in any way, such as injustice or detraction, or false testimony, done serious injury to his neighbor, must be resolved to repair it at once, if at all within

his power to do so. He who has only venial sins to confess must be firmly resolved to avoid one kind of his venial sins. Whoever has not the requisite firm purpose of amendment when he makes his confession, makes a bad confession.

When we prepare to go to confession, we ought to reflect seriously for some moments on some of the following subjects: Death, judgment, hell, heaven, the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, God's love and benefits, our ingratitude towards Him, and especially on God's infinite goodness and perfections. He who does this earnestly, will soon have a sincere sorrow for his sins and the firm purpose to sin no more.

6. The Confession. After carefully making the aforesaid preparation, we are sufficiently disposed to make a good confession. In the confessional, when the priest is ready to hear our confession, we say to him: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned." Then let us tell him how long it is since we made our last good confession. After this let us confess at least the mortal sins we have since committed, as far as we remember, together with their number.

Our confession should be: 1, entire, that is, we must confess at least every mortal sin, both in kind and number, since our last good confession; we are not bound to confess those circumstances that merely aggravate a sin, but only those that change its kind or species, such as the circumstance of relationship, etc., in deeds of impurity; 2, sincere, that is, without concealing, or diminishing a mortal sin or its number, through fear or shame; 3, humble, that is, confessing as being really guilty, without seeking to excuse or justify our sins; 4, short, that is, we must tell our sins merely by their name, or kind, and number, in as few and as plain words as possible, without giving unnecessary details or circumstances, and without mentioning the sins of others, or laying the blame on them.

7. Having finished telling our sins, we should conclude

our confession somewhat in this manner: "I accuse myself, Rev. Father, of all these sins and of all I do not remember, and ask of you a penance and, if you deem me worthy, absolution also." If we have had only venial sins to confess, we shall do well to include some grievous sin of our past life, which we have already confessed, and for which we are very sorry, saying as above and inserting before asking for a penance, such words as these: "and especially a sin of my past life against the —— commandment, for which I am very sorry, and I ask of you," etc. After this we should listen attentively to the confessor's questions, if he asks us any, and answer them plainly, sincerely and candidly. Let us listen with attention, docility and submission to his admonitions, directions, suggestions and counsels, and gratefully accept the penance he imposes on us.

8. The Absolution. Unless the priest tells us the contrary, he then gives us absolution, that is, he forgives us our sins, by saying in Latin: "I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." If we have made our confession with the dispositions just explained, the priest's absolution remits our sins as sure and effectively as if Jesus Christ Himself had pronounced these words over us.

Who are unworthy of absolution? All those who do not confess with the requisite dispositions, as explained above. Although the priest may think such persons have made a good confession, and therefore pronounces the form of absolution over them, yet their sins are not forgiven, because the priest is deceived, since he cannot read their hearts; but God, who reads the hearts of all men, is not deceived by such persons, and therefore does not ratify the priest's absolution of unrepentant sinners. However, this should not discourage or disturb us, for, if we prepare ourselves as well as we can and make a sincere confession to the best of our ability and the priest absolves us, we can

be morally certain of God's forgiveness also. The following classes of persons are also unfit or unworthy to receive absolution: 1, those who *always relapse into the same sins without ever making a serious effort to amend;* 2, those who are not sincerely resolved to avoid, or give up, the proximate occasion of sin; 3, those who refuse to make the necessary restitution, to repair the serious injury they have done to their neighbor; 4, those who will not give up their hatred towards their neighbor, or forgive those who have injured them; 5, the parents who neglect the religious training of their children, and who allow them to frequent occasions of sin; 6, those who are ignorant of the necessary mysteries of religion; if such persons come to confession, the confessor should use the necessary means to impart to them the necessary knowledge; 7, all members of forbidden secret societies; 8, those who actually intend committing a grievous sin, such as, to get married by a Protestant minister or a magistrate; 9, those who are not resolved to sin no more.

9. The Satisfaction. The penance imposed should be performed punctually as prescribed, and with as little delay as possible.

10. He who is refused absolution, should set himself in all earnestness to follow the directions of his confessor and amend his life, and, if possible, return to confession at the time prescribed or soon after to the *same* confessor; if he goes to confession to another confessor, he is bound to repeat to the latter all the sins he had confessed without receiving absolution.

11. When to Go to Confession. 1, At least once a year; 2, when about to receive a sacrament, such as, holy Communion, matrimony; 3, when about to go on a long or dangerous journey, or into any great danger; 4, when about to die; when in a dangerous illness. If we cannot have a confessor and are in danger of death with some mortal sin or sins on our conscience, we must make an act of

perfect contrition (See No. 4 above). 5, Whenever we have committed a mortal sin, we should go to confession as soon as possible, for, as the time of our death is uncertain and may be very near, we should not defer our confession even for one day, lest death should carry us off before we have made our peace with God. He who has committed a mortal sin should, indeed, endeavor, as soon as he realizes his misfortune, to make an act of perfect contrition with the resolution to confess his sin at the very first opportunity. 6, As often as may be necessary to keep us from committing mortal sin and to lead such a life as may keep us always in a fit state to die a good death.

12. Results of a Good Confession: 1, Spiritual resurrection for him who had committed mortal sin. "My son was dead, and now he is alive again" (Luke 15. 32). 2, The recovery, or increase, of sanctifying grace. This is like a new creation. 3, God dwells in the soul, filling it with His gifts and true peace of mind, and the practice of virtue and victory over temptation become much easier.

13. Evil Results of a Bad Confession. 1, The sins are not forgiven; 2, by her sacrilege the soul sinks deeper into sin and becomes more deformed and hideous; 3, a good confession becomes much more difficult than before; 4, conversion becomes extremely difficult. because the soul is now possessed by seven devils; 5, God withdraws His special graces, and the soul, therefore, gradually becomes spiritually blind and obdurate and there is danger of death in sin and eternal reprobation; 6, all supernatural merit so far gained is lost, and no more can be gained till the state of grace is recovered by a good confession; 7, he who continues to make bad confessions, sinks deeper and deeper into sin, and his soul becomes, as it were, poisoned by sacrilege.

CONFESSION

"When He saw them, He said: Go, show yourselves to the priests" (Luke 17. 14).

Such is the remedy our divine Saviour prescribes for the horrible disease of leprosy. Such also is the powerful and efficacious remedy offered by the Church for a far more horrible and hideous disease. In the Old Law the priests did not, could not cure leprosy, but could only declare, after due examination, either its presence or its disappearance. In the New Law, however, the priests are empowered to cure the horrible leprosy of sin. But how many Catholics infected with the terrible leprosy of sin will not have recourse to these spiritual physicians! Why do they flee the prescribed, the only sure remedy? One reason is that they are too proud, too indifferent to make use of it. Another reason for some is that they are not sufficiently persuaded of the efficacy of this wholesome remedy. We may not, without ceasing to be true members of the Church of Jesus Christ, deny or omit the duty of confession. In the first place, he who is in the state of sin stands in need of a sure remedy; and secondly, he who is in the state of grace needs strength to avoid sin and to persevere in the state of grace.

I. Confession is the ordinary and most effective means to blot out sin. Sin can be effaced or remitted only by the means prescribed and accepted by God. He usually accepts only proportionate means. Confession is the effective means, first, because it is the will of God. Confession is a law of mercy. "There is a new kind of trial," says Zeno of Verona, "in which the culprit is condemned, if he denies or justifies his guilt, and is absolved or forgiven,

if he sincerely confesses it." "We confess even our most secret sins," says St. John Chrysostom, "in order to escape condemnation." "Wash me yet more (O Lord,) from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I know (acknowledge) my sin" (Ps. 50. 4, 5). The efficacy of confession is also an effect of God's goodness towards those who acknowledge their guilt. The emperor Theodosius the Great would sometimes try criminals himself; when they had been compelled to confess their guilt and were awaiting their sentence, he would pardon them, for, says St. Ambrose, "he preferred winning them to causing their ruin." Prince Ossuno, having one day asked the convicts on a galley what crimes they had committed, all protested their innocence, except one who acknowledged his crime. The prince, feigning anger, said to him roughly: "You villain, how dare you remain in the company of these good and upright persons! Away with you at once!" He then set him at liberty. To be the recipients of the divine forgiveness, let us also confess our guilt like the royal psalmist: "To Thee alone have I sinned and have done evil before Thee, that Thou mayst be justified in Thy words" (Ps. 50. 6), and forgive the contrite of heart. Let us "confess (our guilt) to the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth forever" (117. 1). "Why," asks St. Augustine, "fearest thou to confess to the Lord, who is good and merciful to him who avows his guilt? Propitiate Him by your confession rather than excite His wrath by your denials."

But to confess to a man! Yes, and all your sins; the early Christians did it "in the council of the just and in the congregation" (Ps. 110. 1). The priest holds the place of God Himself. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20. 23). Is it too much to require confession to the priest for the ineffable grace of forgiveness and for freeing you from the everlasting fire of hell? "Let

us therefore go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grâce" (Hebr. 4, 16).

II. There are three things in confession which are capable of winning God's heart for the sinner.

1. In the first place, confession humbles the sinner. "Penance," says Tertullian, "has man's humiliation for its object." Nothing is more humiliating than the detailed confession of our sins. It discovers to us our misery, our frailty, our sinfulness. There is usually no humility required to call ourselves "a great sinner," in general terms. But it is really humiliating for us to acknowledge our sins in their species and number. This is the reason why so many give up going to confession. The more we humble ourselves, the more we are pleasing to God. Wherefore "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5. 5).

2. Secondly, a sincere confession excites true contrition for sin. We usually realize the malice of our sins only in confession. In confession "there is no peace for my bones because of my sins" (Ps. 37. 4). In confession "I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Is. 38. 15). The very obligation of confessing our sins to a man like ourselves proves their enormity and malice, since they are deserving of such a punishment!

3. Thirdly, confession may be considered as a part of the satisfaction required for sin. The great difficulty and repugnance of declaring our guilt to a man like ourselves, form a laborious exercise of penance, which is deserving of merit before God. "In confession," says St. Gregory the Great, "we find wherewith to pay our debts to God." "Confession," says St. Ambrose, "is the compendium of the penalties" (due to sin). "Confession and beauty (of soul) are before Him" (Ps. 95. 6). Had you as great a desire to please God as you have to please weak and frail creatures by your exterior appearance, there would be no

need to invite, exhort and urge you to cleanse your soul of her sins and clothe her with the bright garment of sanctifying grace.

III. Although the sanctification of the sinner is the greatest work of God, nevertheless our justification would not secure our salvation, if we lacked the means of preserving ourselves from relapse. Confession not only reconciles us with God, but also imparts constancy to our reconciliation, first, in relation to our divine Saviour. Confession, or rather the sacrament of penance, is a divine source of grace flowing from His sacred side, or heart. "You shall draw waters out of the fountains of the Saviour" (Is. 12. 3). The sacrament of penance has its own special graces, graces not only of forgiveness of sin, but of defense, strength and support. He who makes a good confession, has a claim to these special graces, which enable him to persevere. He who has given up confession, renounces these graces, and the result will be that he will fall deeper and deeper into sin.

2. Secondly, in relation to the confessor. When you go to confession, you meet with a prudent and zealous director, who seeks your sanctification. He points out the dangers you must avoid, and marks out your line of conduct, which will enable you to save your soul. Those who neglect confession are like a blind man who refuses a guide in a dangerous path.

3. Thirdly, in relation to yourself. What does your own experience say to you? The thought, "I will go to confession to-morrow," or "I went to confession last night, last week, therefore, I will not go to that place, or with those companions, I will not commit that sin," will enable you to avoid relapsing into the sins you confessed. But he who has cast off the yoke of confession, has also cast off all restraint. Many fair-minded unbelievers and non-Catholics have been compelled by their own convictions, deduced from due observation, to admit that, in itself, confession is the most

powerful restraint against vice and crime! Moreover, how many bad Catholics, who will not go to confession themselves for private reasons of their own, are nevertheless over-anxious that their wives, daughters and servants should go frequently to confession!

Finally, the experience of centuries shows that the practice of going to confession changes sinners into good, virtuous men and women, and that it is the greatest corrective of sin and vice.

SINCERITY IN CONFESSION

"There is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace" (Eccli. 4. 25).

Confession is man's purgatory on earth, a purgatory of sorrow and tears, wherein the guilt and punishment of sin are expiated and forgiven. It is hard for poor human nature, but necessary. "Be confounded and ashamed at your own ways, O house of Israel" (Ez. 36. 32). "Be confounded and bear thy shame" (Ez. 16. 52). The punishment, however painful and difficult, is mild and lenient, and far below the sinner's deserts.

Sin disgraces man, puts him to shame, makes him blush! The sinner should undergo this shame at least in the sacred tribunal of penance. He can play the hypocrite among his fellow-men, but not with God! The shame undergone by the sinner in making a sincere confession is a

1. Praiseworthy shame; it brings him glory for, 1, he thereby accepts and fulfils an obligation imposed upon him by Jesus Christ. The sinner is bound to manifest all the serious spiritual diseases of his soul, that is, all his mortal sins, to the priest, his spiritual physician. St. Gregory the Great considers a sincere confession as an heroic deed, for often it requires greater heroism to make a sincere confession than to avoid sin altogether. 2, The more virtuous the act, the more praiseworthy also. A sincere confession demands acts of faith, hope, charity, humility, self-denial, penance, etc. 3, History testifies that the penitent sinners who acquired great holiness, did not deem it dishonorable to confess publicly their evil deeds. Among these are St. Augustine, St. Mary of Egypt, St. Margaret of Cortona, who became great saints. God has given us shame as a

bulwark or a preventive against committing sin, but not against freeing ourselves from the degradation and slavery of sin. There is no act more noble than to conquer oneself. It is the greatest, the most admirable of victories.

2. Useful shame, for it brings divine grace to the sinner. 1, He who has properly prepared himself for confession, is sure of obtaining the pardon of his sins by a sincere confession. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John 1. 9). The priest may not refuse absolution to a well-disposed penitent. 2, A sincere confession imparts peace. Mortal sin in the soul is like undigested food in the stomach; it must be cast up or removed, or else it disturbs the whole system. The sinner is disturbed by remorse for his sin. The greater, the more heinous the sin, the greater and the more persistent his remorse. To escape persistent remorse, many a criminal delivers himself to the officers of the law, confessing his criminal deed, ready to undergo condign punishment, that he may thus escape unendurable remorse. By making a sincere confession the sinner rids himself of his persistent remorse and of his sins and their guilt, and recovers interior peace. There is, as experience proves, no greater earthly pleasure and satisfaction than that afforded by a reconciliation with God by means of a sincere confession! There is nothing sweeter on earth than the tears of repentance of the sinner who has made a good confession! 3, Such a confession imparts security at the hour of death. An eminent physician declared that frequently a painful agony is the result of a bad conscience at the hour of death! The sinner should beware of deferring making a good and sincere confession to the hour of his death; and as this terrible hour, on which his eternity depends, is uncertain and may come at any time, his only security is to make such a confession at once, without the least delay, otherwise it may be too late. If he does so at once, how

secure he will be of a happy eternity! 4, Such a confession will also spare him terrible shame and confusion at the tribunal of Jesus Christ. His unpardoned sins will be as visible to all as if they were branded on his forehead! How much better to experience a little shame before the confessor, often a perfect stranger, with the assurance of pardon, than before the whole universe with a sentence of irrevocable condemnation to eternal torments!

3. The shame of making a sincere confession amounts to very little after all. 1, The sinner needs not to have any great dread therein concerning his hidden faults; the confessor knows, by experience, the extent of human frailty and weakness. 2, Nor should the penitent greatly dread the confessor, who is most anxious to help sinners to get rid of their sins and be reconciled with God. He is not like the Pharisees who sought to punish Mary Magdalen and the adulteress woman! The confessor treats the penitent as he would himself like to be treated, were he in the sinner's place, for, as St. Augustine remarks and the confessor knows, every man is liable to do the evil others have done, and to do even worse than they! 3, How the sinner may confess the sin that puts him to shame. Let him confess that sin first of all. Let him earnestly pray to God to help him to tell it; invoke the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, of his guardian angel. Let him say to God: "Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion and my shame" (Ps. 68. 20); "therefore, Lord, help me to confess that sin." Another way is to say to the priest: "Father, I have committed a sin, which I am ashamed, or afraid, to confess. Please help me to do so." And the priest by his questions will help you to come out with it. Therefore "for thy soul be not ashamed to tell the truth" (Eccli. 4. 24). "Be not ashamed to confess thy sins" (Eccli. 4. 31).

Therefore, have courage, for with God's help, with Mary's help, your terror will soon be over, and then how light and how happy you will feel!

GENERAL CONFESSION

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for the washing of the sinner" (Zach. 13. 1).

The fountain mentioned by the prophet is a symbol of the sacrament of penance, a spiritual cleansing bath formed of the precious blood of the God-Man and the tears of repentance of penitent sinners. This fountain is always open, but especially in seasons of grace.

1. For Whom is a general confession necessary? It is necessary for him who has made his previous confession or confessions 1, without sufficient knowledge of the necessary articles of faith; 2, without the proper examination of conscience, and therefore omitted telling many of his grievous sins; 3, without sincerity, such as, wilfully and knowingly concealing a mortal sin, or the number of his mortal sins, or those circumstances which alter or increase the species (kinds) of his grievous sins. All such confessions and all those similarly made since then are sacrilegious and must be repeated. "He that hideth his sins shall not prosper; but he that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy" (Prov. 28. 13). "The mouth that belieth killeth the soul" (Wisd. 1. 11). "Thou hast lied not to men, but to God" (Acts 5. 4). 4, He who has made the previous confession or confessions without contrition; 5, without the firm purpose of amendment, of sinning no more, such as not to be willing, when able, to make a necessary restitution, or reparation of injury he had done to his neighbor, or to forgive his enemies, or to overcome his hatred of another, or to shun the proximate occasion of sin, or to give up a forbidden secret society, or to use the

means necessary to overcome his evil habit and amend his life.

For all the aforesaid persons a general confession, at least since the last good confession, is necessary. Were the vessel you were sailing in on the sea to become a total wreck, and you would have a chance of holding on to a mast or a large plank and be saved, how happy you would feel! Would you hesitate to hold on to it? In like manner, you have suffered spiritual shipwreck by your bad confessions, and now have one sure chance of being saved and rescued from eternal death by holding on to the saving plank of a general confession! Should you not profit by this opportunity and thank God for it?

2. Advantages of a Good General Confession. It repairs all your past bad confessions, and obtains your complete forgiveness from God's infinite mercy. It removes the evil consequences of sin which defiles the soul, robs it of its spiritual life, of sanctifying grace, and of its peace of mind. 1, A good general confession purifies the soul, for Jesus says to the priest, as He did to the apostles: "Whose sins you shall forgive," etc. (John 20). However numerous and heinous our sins may be, a good general confession washes away all our grievous sin and embellishes our soul with the garment of sanctifying grace, which makes it beautiful, bright and ravishing like the countenance of Jesus during His transfiguration on Mount Thabor, so that God says of the sinner after his good general confession: "This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased." His soul is now pure and adorned with the nuptial garment, and is fit to partake of the feast of the Lamb. To St. Margaret of Cortona, who had been a great sinner, God said after her general confession: "Now thou art My daughter." 2, A good general confession enriches the soul. Mortal sin deprives the soul of all hitherto accumulated merits. They are probably restored after a good confession. To a good general confession we may apply

what the prophet says of doing penance: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins, he shall not die; I will not remember all the iniquities he hath done" (Ez. 18. 21, 22). A good general confession restores the love and friendship of God, and renders the penitent sinner capable, by means of a good intention, of gaining merit for heaven for everything he does, even for the things that are indifferent in themselves. If the sinner's repentance is great and proportionate to his sins, he will receive rare and choice favors from God and obtain one of the brightest crowns in heaven, as has been the case with so many holy penitents. "O happy penance," exclaims St. John Chrysostom, "which imparts grace in greater abundance! By her penance Magdalen became purer than virgins!" 3, A good general confession heals our remorse and restores peace and interior happiness to our soul. Remorse is a grace that pursues the sinner after his sin and leaves him no rest, until he has properly confessed it. Remorse, next to prayer, is the last grace God gives to the sinner. Remorse makes the sinner miserable and deprives him of all peace and happiness, and urges him on, as it were, to go to confession. If he listens to his remorse and prays for grace, he will be helped by God to make a good confession! Having made it, he will feel as if an enormous crushing weight had been removed from him, and his joy and contentment will surpass all the happiness and contentment he had ever previously felt! 4, He who has made bad confessions, should at once make a good general confession, and not wait till he is very sick or about to die, for then such a confession will be, if he has then the opportunity of making it, exceedingly difficult, or next to impossible. But if you make it now

3. A general confession will be comparatively easy, for 1, your earnest prayer will discover to you the really wretched and dangerous state of your soul; 2, the successful examination of your conscience is therefore still in

your power. If you examine the accounts of your soul, you will find therein plenty of fuel for hell. In this matter you have an immense advantage over bankrupt business men, whose affairs are so entangled that not only can they find no remedy, but fail to find out even the real state of their business; but you can find out the real state of your conscience and its remedy, and then you can easily apply the remedy, for in order to place your spiritual affairs on a satisfactory basis, you have 3, to confess only the mortal sins you remember and their number, 4, be sincerely sorry for them, and 5, be firmly resolved no more to commit them.

The sinner should imitate the repentance of King Manasses of Juda, whom God, for his great wickedness, delivered up into the hands of the Assyrians. "They took Manasses, and carried him bound with chains and fetters to Babylon. And after he was in distress, he prayed to the Lord his God, and did penance exceedingly before the God of his fathers. And he entreated Him and besought Him earnestly; and He heard his prayer, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom" (2 Paral. 33. 11–13).

(Conclude with an application of Manasses' conversion and forgiveness.)

V. SERIES OF THE SEVEN CAPITAL SINS

THE VICE OF PRIDE. (No. 1)

Pride is an inordinate and exaggerated opinion of our own excellence, which induces us to attribute to ourselves the gifts of God as if they were our own independently of Him, to prefer ourselves to our neighbor and to despise him, as if he was inferior to us in good qualities.

I. Pride Supremely Displeases God.

1. Pride was the first sin ever committed, for it was through pride that Lucifer and one-third of the angels revolted against God. They aimed at being the equals of the Most High. Pride was also the first sin of man, for our parents, Adam and Eve, were led to eat the forbidden fruit with the expectation of becoming thereby like God through the knowledge of good and evil.

2. Pride, more than any vice, or sin, attacks and outrages God. By his other sins man turns away from God to creatures, and injures himself and his neighbor. But by pride man raises himself above creatures and endeavors to deprive God of His glory. The proud man "hath stretched out his hand against God and strengthened himself against the Almighty" (Job. 15. 25). God is man's greatest Benefactor and bestows His gifts with a lavish hand upon him; but He reserves His glory to Himself. "I will not give My glory to another" (Is. 42. 8). He justly wills that man should give Him the credit for all His gifts, and not rob Him of them by claiming them as his own.

3. Pride is the most unreasonable and inexcusable of sins. Other sinners are led into sin by some passion, by some dangerous occasion. But pride can have no such ex-

cuse or pretext; for what can we boast of? Of our bodies, our beauty, our strength and other good and excellent qualities? Has not God given us all the good we have? Of our soul's good qualities, such as talents, abilities? Are not they also gifts of God? Of our fortune, of our position in society? Are they not also the result of God's gifts? Apart from God's gifts, our mind, left alone to itself, is only darkness, liable to the grossest errors, and our heart becomes the receptacle of all passions and vices! Of itself, our will is weak, inconstant and inclined to every kind of evil! And what will soon become of us, for after a certain number of years at most, death will deprive us of all inducements to pride. Every good we enjoy, both in the order of nature and in the order of grace, is a gift of God's goodness and munificence towards us.

4. How fearfully God punishes pride. On account of their pride the rebellious angels were at once precipitated into the everlasting fire of hell, and our first parents were deprived of all supernatural gifts, expelled from the earthly paradise, condemned to labor and made liable to every kind of physical evil and death; and moreover, their mind was darkened, their will weakened, and they became inclined to evil and had thenceforth to combat the revolt of their passions. And all their posterity has inherited these sad results of their aiming at becoming like God.

The pride of Nabuchodonosor was punished by his becoming for a time similar to cattle and deprived of the use of reason. Aman was brought to the gallows on account of his pride. How pride was punished in Jesabel, in Dathan and Abiron, in the great Napoleon! How many through pride fell into heresy, persevered in it, and miserably died in it!

II. Pride Is Most Injurious to Man.

1. Pride is the most dangerous of the passions, of the capital sins. We all have the germ of pride in us. It be-

comes developed imperceptibly. The other vices are more easily detected; hence they are more apt to be detested and abhorred. For instance, we easily perceive the feelings of envy and anger arising in us; the vices of covetousness, sloth and gluttony cannot long remain hidden, nor the sting of lust. But the vice of pride is not so clearly apparent to the proud man; hence it is the last vice we seek to correct in ourselves.

So dangerous is the vice of pride, that it glides usually unperceived into even our holiest actions. We pride ourselves, without being aware of it, in doing good, in practising some virtue, in the number and length of our prayers, in performing some good work. "Pride," says St. John Climacus, "causes us to lose the riches of grace and the sweat or hardship of penance." "Pride," says St. Gregory, "is the sign of reprobation, for it is the sin of the devils and the reprobates." Spiritual pride, the sin of the Pharisees, is the most wicked and dangerous form of pride.

2. "Pride," says the Holy Ghost, "is the beginning of all sin" (Eccli. 10. 15), just as humility is the foundation of all virtue. The sinner is such, because he is too proud to submit to the law of God, to deny himself, to overcome himself. It is pride that causes us to despise our neighbor, to prefer ourselves to him; it excites us to inordinate ambition, to vanity, vain-glory, ostentation, presumption, hypocrisy, obstinacy, envy, disobedience, for all these sins are the offspring of pride. A proud man is irascible, hot-tempered, violent, vindictive, jealous and envious.

And how often is pride punished by humiliating falls into shameful deeds! "Wherefore," says St. Paul, "God delivered them to shameful affections" (Rom. 1. 26). Pride stirs up quarrels and disturbances in the family, rebellion against authority, whether domestic, civil or ecclesiastical, and wars between nations. Hence St. Peter Damian says: "Pride is the compendium of all evils."

3. "Pride," says the Holy Ghost, "is hateful before God and men" (Eccli. 10. 7). No one loves a proud man, for he cannot agree with others; he is haughty, domineering and pompous, full of his own importance. All shun him; his superiors, because he acts as if he were their equal; his equals, because he wishes to lord over them; his inferiors, because he tyrannizes over them and disdains them. He is not aware that he is often the laughing-stock of all on account of his pretentious and haughty manners. "Pride," says St. Gregory, "is a diabolical sign, a sign of reprobation."

4. For the spiritually proud, like the Pharisees, there is no hope of amendment or of conversion, and why? Because there can be no conversion without the grace of God; but there is no such grace for the proud, for "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5. 5). All kinds of persons came to Jesus asking for favors, but no proud Pharisee ever was among them. Hence none of them was ever converted. To obtain grace, the proud must first humble themselves and acknowledge their own helplessness and need. But the spiritually proud, like the Pharisee praying in the temple, consider themselves perfect and not in need of God's help; hence they will never pray for the grace of conversion. The other proud men may be converted, when God sends them humiliations; if they then accept them and humble themselves and repent and pray for mercy, they will surely obtain mercy!

THE VICE OF PRIDE. (No. 2)

"Pride," says St. Augustine, "is an evil desire for honors joined to an unlimited self-complacency."

There are four kinds of pride: the pride of the heart, of the mouth, of deeds, and of rich clothing, or possessions, or position.

1. He who has pride of the heart, thinks wonders of his ability and talents, of his beauty, strength, or other natural gifts.

2. He who has pride of the mouth is one who is accustomed to boast about himself, about whatever concerns him.

3. He who has pride of deeds, feels and shows himself proud of what he considers his great deeds or performances, whether they be good or bad, for there are persons who are wicked enough to be proud of their crimes.

4. He who is proud of his clothing, possessions, or position, considers himself better than others who are not so well dressed, who are not so wealthy or in such a good position as he.

5. To these four kinds of pride we may add spiritual pride, the pride of those who make a show of holy life, and pretend to be sinless, to be better than other men; it is the pride of those men who resemble the Pharisees of the Gospel, who looked upon other men as despicable sinners and upon themselves as holy and models of virtue. It is the worst and most wicked and hardened form of pride.

"The coach of pride," says St. Isidore, "is drawn by a four-horse team: the desire of domination, self-love, contempt of others and disobedience to authority. Its wheels are pride of mind, arrogance, loquacity and levity. The coachman is self-esteem. Pride is the source of all vices and the corruption of all virtues."

The proud man is an abomination before God, for he attributes to himself the gifts of God, and thus robs God of the honor due Him. Whatever good or good quality man has, he has received it all from God; of himself man is only weakness, helplessness, sinfulness, capable of nothing good. Hence the proud man robs God of the honor and glory due Him for the gifts he has received from God. Therefore God says: "I hate arrogance and pride" (Prov. 8. 13). He is therefore an abomination to God, and deceives himself, for St. Paul says: "If any man thinketh himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6. 3). "Pride is hateful before God and men" (Eccli. 10. 7).

Pride is the source of many vices. The proud man is so taken up with himself, he has such an exalted opinion of himself, that he prefers himself to all other men, and therefore despises them. The proud man, for the same reasons, does not give to God the honor due Him, and is apt to neglect his religious duties and even to lose his faith. He is also presumptuous, for relying on his own strength and virtue, and not being accustomed to pray, he will, sooner or later, not flee the occasions of sin, or fail to pray in time of temptation, and will, consequently, fall deeply into sin, and shamefully give way to his passions, as a universal experience teaches.

"The other vices," says St. Gregory, "each combat only one special virtue; pride combats all the virtues; it attacks the whole moral man as pestilence attacks the whole physical man; and although it may have the appearance of virtue, it is really only man's vain-glory." "God," says St. Laurence Justinian, "has never shown mercy to the proud," for the proud practically do not consider themselves poor, miserable sinners; they are too proud for that. God punishes the proud both in this life and in the next. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5. 5). He usually humbles them here below

by some great misfortune or some shameful fall. The proud Nabuchodonosor was for a time bereft of the use of his reason and ate grass like an ox. The great Napoleon ended his life on the island of St. Helena after five years of a dreary captivity.

"Pride," says St. John Chrysostom, "often makes a man ridiculous," for he struts about like a peacock, displaying his pretended superior qualities! He is like a man who, in order to appear tall, walks on tip-toe and is in constant danger of falling over." He is also a man with a swelled head, who, being top-heavy, is in constant danger of falling over.

Pride is like the wind which blows out the light, dries up the dew, and stirs up and scatters the dust. In like manner, pride puts out the light of wisdom, dries up the dew of divine grace, and stirs up and scatters the dust of vanity and renders it injurious to the sight of the mind, so that the proud man by his pride becomes spiritually blind, deprived of divine grace and is not aware of the abyss into which he is hastening. Hence pride naturally leads to reprobation, for "the day shall come kindled as a furnace, and all the proud . . . shall be stubble" (Mal. 4. 1).

How to cure pride. Pride can be cured by serious meditations, or reflexions, on God's perfections, on His greatness, His gifts, goodness and love towards us, and on our own weakness, helplessness, misery and sinfulness; and also on the guilt and ingratitude of the proud, and the terrible consequences of pride in this life and hereafter. To these repeated reflections we should add acts of humility and contrition, prayer and the practices of a good Christian life.

HUMILITY

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. 11. 29).

Just as "pride is the beginning of all sin" (Eccli. 10. 15), so "is humility," says St. Cyprian, "the foundation of all holiness." "It is," says St. Jerome, "the first of all the Christian (moral) virtues." St. Bernard calls "humility the base and guardian of the virtues." It is the remedy of pride and the safeguard of man against sin and vice.

There are two kinds of humility: Humility of the mind, or theoretical humility, and humility of the heart, or practical humility.

THEORETICAL HUMILITY is nothing else than a true, correct self-knowledge. It consists in the knowledge of what we really are of ourselves, and not of what we imagine we are of ourselves; and in the knowledge of what God's grace and benefits have made us. Hence St. Teresa says: "Humility is truth."

PRACTICAL HUMILITY, or humility of the heart, which our divine Saviour bids us to learn from Him, consists in conducting ourselves in accordance with the knowledge of what we really are of ourselves. Theoretical humility is not a moral virtue, but is only the true knowledge we have of ourselves. A man may possess this knowledge even in a high degree, and yet be abominably proud, if he does not put his knowledge into practice. The really humble man is he who is humble of heart. Such a one knows very well that of himself he is a weak, helpless, miserable and sinful creature, who is inclined to evil, who cannot of himself do anything good or pleasing to God, nor even have a good thought, except through the grace of God, and that, without this grace, he is capable of committing even the

most heinous and horrible crimes. He therefore does not pride himself for anything good or any good quality he may possess, because they are all gifts of God, and must be referred to Him. Deeply convinced of these truths he humbles himself as helpless and sinful, mistrusts himself and puts all his trust in God, and refers to God all the good qualities he may possess and all the good he may be able to perform. Instead of being puffed up with pride, he despises himself and accepts being despised by his fellowmen. Convinced of his misery and helplessness, he has recourse to prayer in all his wants and temptations with full confidence in God, and is not deceived, for "God, who resisteth the proud, giveth His grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5. 5). "The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold" (Eccli. 35. 21). "The Lord will save the humble of spirit" (Ps. 33. 19). "The Lord hath regard to the prayer of the humble" (Ps. 101. 18), as our divine Saviour teaches us in the parable of the Pharisee and publican praying in the temple.

"Humility," says St. Gregory, "is the mistress, the mother, the source and root of all the virtues." In the first place, it is the root of faith, for to believe in the revealed mysteries which seem contrary to reason, we must humble ourselves and submit our reason to divine revelation. The Pharisees, who were proud, did not accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, and were thus deservedly rebuked by Him: "How can you believe, who receive glory one from another, and the glory which is from God you do not seek" (John 5. 44).

In the second place, humility is the root of hope. The proud man trusts in himself, but the humble man places all his confidence in God. Knowing his unworthiness, he wonders: "What is a man, that Thou, O God, shouldst magnify him? Or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" (Job 7. 17).

Thirdly, since the proud man cannot live without violating the charity he owes to other men, the humble man practises patience and forbearance towards his fellow-men, and does not despise them, but esteems them as better than himself, and accepts every cross and trial from his neighbor as a punishment which God sends him for his sins: "I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Mich. 7. 9). Thus speaks the humble man. He is ready and satisfied to bear contempt, slights and humiliation from his neighbor.

Fourthly, humility is the root, the mainstay of chastity. The proud are presumptuous. Their presumption often leads them into the near occasions of sin and into deep falls. The humble, mistrusting themselves, keep away from sinful occasions, and in temptation put all their trust in God and pray for help, and God grants them the victory.

In fine, pride begets disobedience, for it will not submit to either will or judgment; but humility gladly submits to God's holy will as manifested directly by His commandments, or indirectly by the representatives of His authority.

Means of Acquiring Humility. The first means consists in self-examination. We should consider, first, the origin of our body by creation from nothing, and its end by death and corruption. Then let us consider our soul and its faculties created by God; our limited faculties; our mind obscured and darkened and our will weakened because of the fall of our first parents; our ignorance, or rather our very limited knowledge; our inclination to evil; the revolt of our passions; our past sins; our ingratitude towards God for His gifts in both the natural and the supernatural order.

Then let us consider that all that is good in us is a gift of God without any merit or claim on our part. "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4. 7). "If any man think himself to be

something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6. 3). "Why is earth and ashes proud?" (Eccli. 10. 9).

Why should a man be proud of his wealth, of his beauty, learning, ability, high station, influence? Or even of his virtue and great deeds? Are not all these matters the results of God's gifts and benefits? And since they are, they are no excuse for his pride. Every man is no more in reality than what he is in the sight of God. And whom does God esteem? Those that the world usually despises, for our divine Saviour says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: blessed are the meek; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the clean of heart; blessed are the peace-makers; blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake" (Mat. 5. 3–11). Blessed, therefore, are the humble and the lowly, the meek, the pure, the persecuted, the charitable, the self-sacrificing.

Let us never lose sight of the fact that of ourselves and without God's help, we are incapable of doing anything good: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15. 5). How difficult do we not find it to do good, to avoid sin, to overcome temptations! We need divine grace to do all this. We need it even for good thoughts, for St. Paul says: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3–5). And even if, with God's help, we faithfully keep the commandments, and perform the duties of our state, we have no reason to be proud, for our divine Saviour bids us remain humble, for He says: "When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, you should say: We are unprofitable (useless) servants; (for) we have done (only) that which we ought to do" (Luke

17. 10). God humbles and punishes the proud by permitting them to fall into sin or to undergo some great humiliation; but, as the Blessed Virgin sang in her canticle, "He exalteth the humble" (Luke 1. 52). Heaven will be their reward, and the more humble they have been, the greater will be their happiness in heaven.

THE VICE OF COVETOUSNESS

"Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have, for God hath said: I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee" (Hebr. 13. 5).

The covetous man considers these divine words as a poor rule of life, for he can never possess enough temporal goods; he always wants more. He, therefore, will never trust in divine Providence. His only object in life is to amass wealth, and, even when death stares him in the face, he is still planning for more wealth.

Covetousness is an inordinate passion for wealth, for money, for temporal goods. When this passion is great, it is the prime-mover of all the actions and undertakings of a man, and impels him to use not only lawful means, but also those that are unlawful and mean and degrading, and it continues to grow until death removes him from this world.

1. The covetous man, the miser, is faithless to God, his Creator, his Lord, his final end, whom he values less than worldly goods. Every sinner, it is true, prefers, by his sin, the creature to God; but the covetous man, the miser, does this with greater malice than other sinners, for, says the Holy Ghost, there is "nothing more wicked than the covetous man. Why are earth and ashes proud? There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale, because while he liveth, he hath cast away his bowels" (Eccli. 10. 9, 10), that is, all human feeling.

In the first place, he devotes all his thoughts, all his time, all his efforts and labors merely to enrich himself. Money is the only thing he loves; he loves it for its own sake; it

is his only pleasure, all his consolation and happiness. The greater his gains, the happier he feels. Our divine Saviour says: "The kingdom of God is in you" (Luke 17. 21); "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18. 36). "Woe to you, ye rich, for you have your consolation" (Luke 6. 24). "Avarice," says St. Paul, "is idolatry" (Col. 3. 5). But money is the god of the covetous man, of the miser; he devotes all his time, all his energy, all his undertakings to acquire, increase, keep and economize money, because it is the only thing he loves, the only thing he cares for. Therefore, says St. Augustine, "the covetous man invokes, not God, but money; he worships, not God, but only money." He is entirely indifferent to everything that does not bring him money; he has no regard for things spiritual, for what concerns the service of God and his salvation. He verifies the saying of Jesus Christ: "You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve God and Mammon" (Mat. 6. 24).

Secondly, for the sake of acquiring and increasing his wealth, the covetous man is ready to disobey, displease and offend God; he omits the good works commanded by the laws of God and His Church; he has no compassion for the poor. To enrich himself at the expense of his neighbor, and even of the poorest, he is addicted to lying, cheating, swindling, and even to perjury. Under various pretexts he excuses his hard-heartedness, his dishonesty, his injustice, and refuses to acknowledge his sinfulness. "They that will become rich," says St. Paul, "fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition; for the desire of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6. 9, 10). The covetous man misrepresents his own vices to himself; he imagines he is not miserly, but only frugal; not vicious, but only foreseeing; not deceitful, but clever! In his estimation the tears and lamentations of his victims are mere hypocrisy, the com-

plaints of others are only jealousy; the reproaches of his fellow-men, only persecution!

Thirdly, the covetous man ascribes his success to his industry and ability; he hopes to go to heaven, for he will leave a rich inheritance to his heirs, and will secure his salvation by bequeathing a pittance in his will to have Masses said for his soul! But, says Holy Scripture, "he that loves money, shall not be without sin" (Eccli. 31. 5). Those who are addicted to other vices, are ashamed of them and conceal them from their fellow-men; but the miser boasts of his possessions, of his success! Old age sometimes cures other vices, but covetousness, with all its meanness, increases with age; the nearer he is to death, the more the miser clings to his wealth, so that there is no place for God in his heart. "If thou hast any sense," says St. Bernard, "if thou hast a heart, if thou art able to see, cease now striving after those things that tend to make thee miserable. Blessed is he who does not strive after those things whose possession is burdensome, whose love defiles, and whose loss torments."

2. The covetous man, the miser, is faithless to himself, for he allows himself no enjoyment. "Riches," says Holy Scripture, "are not comely for a covetous man and a niggard, and what shall an envious man do with gold? He that gathereth together by wronging his own soul, gathereth for others, and another will squander away his goods in rioting. He that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good? And he shall not take pleasure in his goods" (Eccli. 14. 3–5). First, in order to get rich the covetous man is parsimonious in everything, niggardly towards every one. He wants wealth, not to live comfortably, or to make his family comfortable, or to do good to his fellow-men. But he wishes to hoard up money, to accumulate real estate, stocks, shares, etc. He scrapes up money everywhere, merely to possess it! And he cares not, if by so doing he renders others miserable. Usually his

wife has to toil like a slave, and he bitterly regrets every expense he has to make for his children, for their education, their clothing! His sour looks and harsh words keep the poor away from his door. From his servants and employees he requires the greatest possible amount of work for the smallest possible wages, and strictly requires them to pay for whatever they break or spoil. To hear him speak, he has harder times, greater losses, less profits than any one else; he is so poor as to be unable to procure what every one else enjoys, or to afford to contribute even a mite in charity, or to his pastor. Of such a one St. Ambrose says: "He stands in need of the whole universe, for even the whole universe suffices not to satisfy his desires!" He does not like to be looked upon as wealthy, lest he be asked for a contribution! He constantly preaches economy, and loves only those of his children who resemble him; hence it almost makes him sick to pay a just debt, or to disburse even the smallest sum. No one knows better than he how to turn everything into money, or to obtain money out of everything. To such a one St. Augustine says: "Thou hast gold; thou hast silver, and although thou hast more than thy share, thou yearnest after more! Thou art full, and thou art yet thirsty! Thou art not wealthy, but diseased, for thou art like the feverish who are always drinking and are always thirsty!" Secondly, the covetous man stores up wealth for others. "There is but one," says Holy Writ, "and he hath not a second, no child, no brother, and yet he ceaseth not to labor, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches; neither doth he reflect, saying: For whom do I labor and defraud myself of good things? In this also is vanity and a grievous vexation" (Eccles. 4. 8). How great will be his pain, his anguish at his last hour to see that he must now leave all that he possesses! And even before this, when he is growing old, how it grieves him to be aware that his heirs are anxious to see him die, to think that they will soon squan-

der what it has cost him so much labor to gather together! The covetous man's heirs are usually worthless persons. Perhaps his very children even attempt and succeed, by process of the law, in having him declared incompetent to manage his possessions! His money, being in part the result of doubtful practices, of his exactions and hard-heartedness towards the poor, carries a curse along with it! "May his children be carried about as vagabonds and beg, and may they be cast out of their dwellings! May the usurer search all his substance, and may strangers plunder his labors" (Ps. 108. 10, 11). The heirs of the covetous man, of the miser, are seldom grateful. If he made some bequests for charity, for the church, they either put off giving them as long as possible, or they contest the will. Moreover, few and short will be their prayers for his soul. The miser lives for others, works for others, dies for others, and is usually damned for others, who will soon forget him. "Thou fool! this very night thy soul shall be demanded of thee, and what thou hast stored up, whose shall it be?" (Luke 12. 20). Thirdly, the covetous man has not a moment's rest, because he distrusts every one. "The more a man's wealth increases," says St. Basil, "the greater the cares it brings along." The miser is constantly afraid of being robbed, cheated, swindled; he trembles lest his undertakings should fail, lest his gains should fall short of his expectations. He has no peace of mind, for his desires are insatiable. He envies the success of his neighbor. "The eye of the covetous man is insatiable in his portion of iniquity; he will not be satisfied till he consume his own soul, drying it up" (Eccli. 14. 9). He has no human pleasure, because he is too stingy to procure it. To relieve the poor and the suffering, to gain their affection and gratitude, to make himself useful to his fellow-men, to win their esteem, such are not his aims! "Do good to thy friend before thou die, and according to thy ability stretching out thy hand, give to the poor. Defraud not

thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee. Shalt thou not leave to others to divide by lot thy sorrows and labors? Give and take, and justify thy soul" (Eccli. 14. 13–16). The covetous man has no real, sincere friend, for he loves no one, but mistrusts every one, and never does a favor to others. "A fool shall have no friend, and there shall be no thanks for his good deeds" (Eccli. 20. 17). He is esteemed by none and hated by all. "Riches are good to him who hath no sin in his conscience" (Eccli. 13. 30).

3. Not all men can be rich at the same time. He who desires to acquire a very great fortune, naturally and necessarily desires that others should become poorer. He who endeavors to get rich quickly is usually ready to use even the most unlawful means to attain success and to ruin all who may stand in his way. All who have had dealings with such a one, are able to refer to many dishonest transactions. No one complains more than the miser of hard times; no tyrant is more exacting and heartless than he. He is deaf to the wailings of the orphans and the poor against him; he is insensible to every form of misery. There is no use to ask him for a short delay in paying him his dues. He either mercilessly throws out the sick and even dying tenants into the street, or charges usurious interest for even a single day. When there is question of what he calls his rights, he will let no laws, no conscience, no religion stand in the way of his exactions. King Achab desired Naboth's vineyard and secured it by the most unjust and cruel means. The ancient history of Naboth's vineyard is repeated almost every day in our times. To these are applicable the words of the prophet: "Thou hast covetously oppressed thy neighbors, and thou hast forgotten Me, saith the Lord God. Behold I have clapped My hands at thy covetousness, which thou hast exercised, and at the blood which hath been shed in the midst of thee" (Ezech. 22. 12, 13).

The miser is quarrelsome, violent and cruel even towards his own kin. He is incorrigible. Therefore, "go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, your garments, moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and their rust shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days. Behold the wages of the laborers of which you have defrauded them crieth, and their cry hath entered the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (James 5. 1–4). "The inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish, and with their posterity shall be a perpetual reproach" (Eccli. 41. 9). "Woe to him that gathereth together an evil covetousness to his house, that his nest may be on high, and thinketh that he may be delivered out of the hand of evil. . . . The stone shall cry out (against thee) out of the wall, and the timber that is between the joints of the building shall answer. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and prepareth a city by iniquity" (Habac. 2. 9–12). Avarice is insatiable, not because it can, but because it wishes to have what belongs to others.

ALMSGIVING

"Redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor" (Dan. 4. 24).

(Relate Nabuchodonosor's vision and its interpretation by Daniel.)

"Give alms out of thy substance" (Tob. 4. 7). "Give alms" (Luke 11. 41; 12. 33). By commanding the giving of alms God shows His power over all things, His wisdom in His commands, His goodness towards both the rich and the poor, and His providence in governing and distributing temporal goods. Salvian calls the poor "God's bankers," as is proved by the final sentence He pronounces on the good and the wicked at the general judgment.

I. Almsgiving Is a Universal Law.

St. John Chrysostom compares the oil in the lamps of the virgins to almsgiving, and says: "Let us, therefore, collect this oil, if we wish to enter with the bridegroom; but if we do not bestow alms, we cannot cross the threshold of heaven, although we should perform countless other good works." "You commit a great fault," says St. Ambrose, "if you knowingly suffer any of the faithful to be in want, to suffer hunger and distress, especially the bashful poor." We are, according to St. Paul, all members of the same body, and should "be mutually careful one for another. And if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12. 25, 26). The saints were noted for their almsgiving, and many are the examples of God multiplying food to enable them to feed the hungry, especially in time of famine, for instance St. Thomas of Villanova, St. John the Almoner, bishop of Alexandria.

II. Give Alms From Your Own Goods.

"Deal thy bread to the hungry" (Is. 58. 9. See this whole verse and verses 8 to 11). This manner of bestowing alms is like clean water that cleanses; but to give alms from what belongs to others is like filthy water which soils instead of cleansing. Some allege that they have nothing of their own to give to the needy. "We have, however," says St. Augustine, "many superfluities, if we keep only *what we actually need*. But if we seek vain things, nothing will prove sufficient for us. The exercise of mercy is nothing else than the bond of charity, than the vehicle which brings us through this world to our true country, heaven. Behold, then, what you purchase with your alms! How cheap it is! And when do you purchase it? You purchase the kingdom of heaven by giving alms during the short span of your life!"

III. How to Give Alms.

1. In the first place, we should give alms with a good intention. The best intention is to give alms to the poor as the representatives of Jesus Christ, who says: "Whatever you do to the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me" (Mat. 25. 40). "O wonderful goodness of Christ," exclaims St. Augustine, "who divests Himself of His independence, and wills to be dependent and in want in the persons of the poor. God could not have bestowed a greater benefit on men than to make His own Word, through whom He created all things, the Head of mankind, and fit mere men to Him as members of His body. How great an injustice it is for you to give your son, your daughter large sums to squander on vain, and even sinful objects, and to refuse to give to your God what He needs for the support of His members, the poor!" On the other hand, how great the reward of him who gives a glass of water to a member of Jesus Christ! "You have done it

unto Me." He who has no good intention loses the merit of his good works, like the Pharisees who gave alms out of vain-glory!

2. Secondly, you should give alms *during your whole life,* and not defer doing so merely in your will! In this case you would give only what you must leave and can no longer enjoy; and such a donation is very often useless to the poor, for the natural heirs usually contest such a will and succeed in depriving the poor of the legacies willed to them! Often charitable institutions not only fail to receive what is bequeathed to them, but, moreover, incur great expenses in supporting their just claims! Your soul will profit far more by small sums given in alms during your life, than by a fortune bequeathed to the poor!

3. Thirdly, give alms in the state of grace. Let us serve God "in holiness and justice" (Luke 1. 75). "He who is wicked towards himself, to whom shall he be good?" (Eccli. 14. 5). The sinner, who is charitable, gives his goods to God and himself to sin! "What is of little value he offers to his Creator, and what is beyond all price, his immortal soul, he throws it away, by his sin, and gives it to the devil," says St. Gregory. He who is in the state of sin is unable to gain merit. Moreover, the manner of gathering alms for the poor, the orphans, etc., should be irreprehensible. Hence often charity balls, for instance, are an unlawful means of almsgiving, for the end does not always justify or sanctify the means. We should not commit the least venial sin to feed, clothe, etc., all the poor!

THE VICE OF LUST, OR IMPURITY

"Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6. 12).

Man's body is material and mortal. It should, therefore, be subject in all things to his spiritual, immortal soul. The material and sensual desires are often fraught with great danger to the soul, and should, therefore, whenever this is the case, be regulated and restrained by man's reason and will, in accordance with the law of God. The vice of lust, or impurity, renders both the body and the soul an abomination to the Creator, and makes man the object of eternal reprobation and the prey of hell. Therefore, "let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof." Christians, as St. Paul directs, should never even mention this vice! But, unfortunately, "their transgressions are multiplied, their rebellions are strengthened" (Jer. 5. 6). "Walk not, as the Gentiles walk . . . having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, who despairing have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness" (Eph. 4. 17–19).

Impurity is a most despicable and shameful vice, which every one guilty of it tries to conceal; and yet how common it is! No vice is more dangerous, and, nevertheless, there is none against which people are less on their guard. There is none so incurable, when it has once taken root. None has more vain excuses, none, more seductive allurements, none, more incurable consequences.

1. Infidels and bad Catholics say: "The pleasures of

lust are a natural necessity." The votaries of lust pretend that it is, at most, a pardonable weakness. But no sin is more inexcusable, for none is more naturally disgraceful. Even the most savage, the most corrupt men are ashamed of it. Even a child blushes when charged with a want of decency, of modesty! Every one seeks concealment to commit it; no one likes to be accused of it. No other vice injures man's body, health and life more, or brings him sooner to the grave. It robs the soul of its cheerfulness, the mind of its keenness, the soul of its ornament. "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust; for when evil shall be sweet in his mouth, he will hide it under his tongue; he will spare it, and not leave it, and will hide it in his throat" (Job 20. 11–13). The youthful votaries of this vice either soon become like living skeletons, or if they reach mature manhood or womanhood, their children will early be the victims of a slow, but sure disease. A visit to some large hospital will convince you of this.

2. This vice is easily discovered in those who are guilty of it. No other vice more easily brings on remorse of conscience. None makes man more desperate to commit it. None whose wickedness is more easily admitted, for none separates man more from God; none is a greater contemner of God's holiness, or defiles more the image of God in man. "Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not yours, for you are purchased with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. 6. 19, 20). He who denies the faith for fear of torments, commits a horrible sin! But he who, for a momentary pleasure of lust, offends God, is far less excusable than an apostate!

No other sin binds man more closely to creatures. The impure man adheres to the creature with his whole reason and will, and plans every kind of means to gratify his pas-

sion. He writes and reads obscene books and plays, invents new suggestive fashions, makes use of obscene pictures, of disgraceful intrigues. The impure man adheres to creatures with his whole heart, and considers happiness to be found in nothing else. He loves the creature with his whole heart and soul, with all his mind and with all his strength! For it he sacrifices his reputation, his wealth. No other passion causes more crimes, murders, suicides, poisoning, duels, divorces! The passion of lust is responsible for many schisms and heresies; for much unbelief, drunkenness, prodigality, profligacy, and sins against every commandment. "The works of the flesh are manifest" (Gal. 5. 19).

3. In the matter of impurity, when fully deliberate or consented to, there is no venial or light sin, but only mortal sin. It is a mortal sin wilfully to harbor impure thoughts, to take wilful pleasure in them; also to seek out of curiosity to learn impure things, to wish to hear about them, to talk about them as a pastime. To commit a grievous sin of impure thoughts or desires takes only a moment. Well may we say to our divine Saviour: "Lord, save us; we perish" (Mat. 8. 25). The eye gazing on strange beauty, on impudent, suggestive dress, obscene pictures or objects, reading bad books; the ear willingly listening to impure conversations, songs, stories and jokes; the tongue uttering double-meaning and obscene words, boasting of impure deeds, exciting others to sin; the feet going to improper plays, amusements, going into obscure, lonely places to commit sinful deeds; the memory recalling past sins, conversations, stories, jokes, songs, pictures; the imagination representing them all; the will loving and seeking danger, careless in combating temptation, in watchfulness, in having recourse to prayer in temptation! "The lust shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it" (Gen. 4. 7).

Our fellow-men can be dangerous to us by their pleasing form, their dress, conversation, singing, demeanor, favors,

our own intentions. "I fear not man," says the adage, "but I dread what is human." "Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn? Or can he walk upon hot coals and his feet not be burnt?" (Prov. 6. 27, 28).

4. Effects of impurity. In no other vice is the habit stronger. Habit hardens us, and soon becomes a second nature, which cannot be rooted out without long, extraordinary efforts on our part, and efficacious grace on the part of God. The body becomes fit for nothing else and susceptible of no other enjoyment. The mind becomes carnal and unable to apply itself to anything else. Spiritual blindness increases along with the habit. "The sensual man," says St. Paul, "perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined" (1 Cor. 2. 14). To require the impure man to have sensible and religious views is the same as to require a fool to be wise, and flesh to be spirit. He who seeks nought but beastly gratification, cannot claim to have rational views. "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand; he is compared to foolish beasts of burden, and made like unto them" (Ps. 48. 13). The impure man, under the influence of his passion, is blind to everything else, is not aware of how despicable it makes him, nor of any other consequences of his sin. "As they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not becoming" (Rom. 1. 28).

Relapse into sins of lust is very easy, for the reason that the impure are enslaved by their senses, by their lust. They fall again without rising, or only appear to rise in order to fall still more deeply. Their remorse becomes more and more blunted, every sinful occasion becomes proximate to them, their inclination to vice becomes daily more vehement, the allurements more enticing, and soon all dread of punishment vanishes and sin becomes for them the order of the day. "Their eyes are full of adulteries and unceasing

sin" (2 Pet. 2. 14). "Their wounds," says St. Augustine, "are turned into pleasantries." "Their strength gives way," says St. Jerome, "but their desires leave them no rest." "Let him pass from the snow (icy) water to excessive heat, and his sin even to hell" (Job 24. 19).

The spirit of God gradually withdraws entirely from the impure. "Wisdom shall not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin" (Wisd. 1. 4). "Can he delight himself with the Almighty, and call upon God at all times?" (Job 27. 10). He is an idolater, for he offers all he has in sacrifice to the gratification of his flesh. "My spirit shall not remain in man forever, because he is flesh" (Gen. 6. 3).

The impure are nearly always on the point of despair, because they are always unwilling to do themselves violence in that which so gratifies their passions. "They always defer their amendment until it becomes more and more difficult," says St. Augustine, speaking from his own experience. Their amendment becomes more difficult, because God withdraws His graces gradually from them for having despised and abused them. Moreover, the failure of their previous half-hearted attempts at amendment, discourages them. "Those who cry to God from the depth of their sins," says St. Augustine, "are not at the bottom, for their crying out for help and mercy raises them up. Those who are really at the bottom, do not feel the necessity of prayer." But conversion is impossible without divine grace, which can be obtained only by fervent, earnest, persistent prayer. Many are like St. Augustine before his actual conversion. "I was afraid, O Lord, lest Thou shouldst hear me quickly and so soon cure me of the disease of concupiscence, which I preferred to satisfy rather than see it extinguished."

The impure form the majority of the sacrilegious communicants for want of sincerity in confession, or of due contrition, or of firm purpose of amendment and of avoid-

ing the occasions of sin. "They form," says St. Alphonsus, "the majority of the reprobates in hell!"

The impure sometimes do not amend even on their death-bed, for "they will not set their thoughts to return (sincerely) to their God, for the spirit of fornication is in the midst of them" (Osee 5. 4).

BAD THOUGHTS

"Perverse thoughts separate from God" (Wisd. 1. 3).

Man by his good thoughts draws near to God, but turns away from Him by his evil thoughts. God is the Lord of our heart and of our mind. He accepts no offering, no sacrifice, unless it is accompanied by that of our heart. "The things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and these things defile man, for from the heart come forth evil thoughts" (Mat. 15. 18, 19). If we do not indulge in evil thoughts, we shall not sin; and if we sincerely wish not to sin, we shall find it easy to banish evil thoughts. He who takes wilful pleasure in evil thoughts, yields to them and commits sin; and he will soon be led to sinful words or deeds.

1. The timorous soul complains: "I am greatly troubled with bad thoughts, and I do not know how to get rid of them." There is a three-fold consolation for such a soul. In the first place, it is not in itself a sin to be beset by such thoughts. Even very great saints were afflicted with evil thoughts. We cannot always keep them away. Without them there would not be much merit on earth or or much reward in heaven. To be even sorely and violently tempted is, by no means, a sign that God has forsaken us. On the contrary; "Because thou wast acceptable unto God, it was necessary that temptation should try thee" (Tob. 12. 13). Even St. Paul and St. Jerome were violently tempted for a long time, and gained great merit thereby. A combat is not a defeat; often when timorous souls fear they have been overcome, they have, on the contrary, gained a great victory and much merit. There can

be no victory without combat. When the temptation is persistent and waxes in strength, the timorous soul is perplexed. But "say to the faint-hearted: Take courage and fear not. . . . God Himself will come and save you" (Is. 35. 4). St. Catharine of Siena had undergone a violent and protracted temptation of bad thoughts. When peace was restored in her mind, Jesus showed Himself to her; she then asked Him where He had been during that terrible temptation and she had called on Him for help. Jesus replied: "I was in thee and with thee." A timorous soul never falls into sin, without being *perfectly sure* of having fallen. Let us bear in mind that "the life of man is a warfare upon earth" (Job. 7. 1). "What doth he know, that hath not been tried?" (Eccli. 34. 9). "He that striveth for the mastery, is not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2. 5). "The Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, or no" (Deut. 13. 3). "My grace is sufficient for thee," said the Lord to St. Paul who had prayed to be freed from such temptations, "for virtue is perfected in infirmity" (2 Cor. 12. 9).

Secondly, it requires no great art to banish bad thoughts, for no temptation is above our strength. Our thoughts are transient and can soon be changed. When we do not like a thing, we have only to turn away from it to something else. "God is faithful," says St. Paul, "for He will not suffer you to be tempted above which you are able, but will also cause you, when troubled with temptation, to be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10. 13). Therefore, when you are tempted, pray; turn your thoughts to other objects; invoke Jesus and Mary; retract such thoughts by an act of contrition; seek some distracting occupation. Do this promptly, fervently, earnestly, constantly. Say: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Reflect on death, judgment and hell. Remember that the devil, like a chained

dog, can bark, but can bite only him who wishes to be bitten!

Thirdly, bad thoughts are not sinful, unless they are wilful. They are wilful only when you are aware of them, perceive their sinfulness and *wilfully consent* to them; otherwise there is no sin in them. "If you remember having, when tempted by bad thoughts, fervently invoked the holy names of Jesus and Mary, you may be sure you have not consented to them," says St. Alphonsus. Prayer in temptation will obtain for you the all-powerful help of God. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4. 13).

2. The temptation of bad thoughts is dangerous and fatal to the unwary, who say: "I do not bother myself much about them, for I do not intend to do anything bad." "He shall die," says the Holy Ghost, "because he hath not received instruction, and in the multitude of his folly, he shall be deceived" (Prov. 5. 23). Some persons imagine that it is not very dangerous or sinful to dwell on bad thoughts, so long as they do not intend to do anything sinful. They do not distinguish between the deliberation and consent of the mind or will and the affection of the heart. The mind or will may sin without the heart having any share in the sin. Every wilful dwelling on evil thoughts is a consent to the sin, though there may be no desire to commit the sinful act, for bad or "perverse thoughts separate from God" (Wisd. 1. 3). Bad and "perverse thoughts are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 15. 26). He who is so indifferent as not to scruple dwelling on bad thoughts, shows that he enjoys them as a pastime, and that his conscience has already become blunted and so dull as not to feel the wounds they cause him. Holy Scripture warns us against such danger. "The word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than a two-edged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents

of the heart" (Hebr. 4. 12). When the sinner is judged after death, a very searching "inquisition shall be made into the thoughts of the ungodly" (Wisd. 1. 9).

3. The presumptuous Catholic says: "Surely I shall not be condemned to hell for mere thoughts, for I have not yet done any wrong." Such an assertion is contrary to faith, which teaches that wilful bad thoughts in matters of importance are grievous sins deserving of everlasting punishment, for "though the delight be only momentary, its punishment is endless." The duration of the sin is no measure of the duration of the punishment it deserves. Even if you had not committed the sinful acts you wilfully dwell on, "her feet go down unto death, and her steps go in as far as hell" (Prov. 5. 5). He who consents to such thoughts by wilfully dwelling on them, actually commits sin, actually grows spiritually weaker and more inclined to evil. He who wilfully consents to impure thoughts, loses sanctifying grace. "The path of their steps are entangled; they shall walk in vain and shall perish" (Job 6. 18). The distance between sin in thought and sin in deed is no further than the last gasp is from death itself. So long as we resist sin in thought, we need have no fear of committing it in deed. He who yields to an evil thought is in the act of falling and knows not when and where his fall will cease! A spark is easily extinguished; but when the fire has commenced to burn, it is not so easily put out.

"Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Eccli. 7. 40.)

Memoranda. 1. What is the difference between a bad thought and a bad desire? A bad thought is a sin only if consented to. A bad desire includes consent in itself and is a sin of the same species as the act desired; he who is guilty of a bad desire has to confess what he desired; whilst he who has consented to bad thoughts, needs not specify the sinful things he wilfully thought of, but should

mention them in general, saying, for instance: "I took wilful pleasure in impure thoughts."

2. The Council of Trent says that indulgence in bad thoughts is sometimes more injurious and dangerous than the evil deeds themselves. Men naturally shrink from an evil deed, but are often apt to have little or no scruple to entertain evil thoughts and evil desires. At the hour of death the temptations will be more violent than during life; hence they will be then especially dangerous to those who have been accustomed during life to indulge in evil thoughts and evil desires.

3. One of the most frequent sources of bad thoughts is the reading of the fashionable novels. A certain young man, having failed to seduce a girl, at last succeeded in his design after he had induced her to read one of those novels. In the pulpit and in the confessional the priest should do all he can to induce his young penitents to read good books and to observe modesty of the eyes, and restrain all vain curiosity, for these are among the most powerful means of warding off impure temptations.

4. St. Augustine warns us not to attribute to ourselves, but to divine grace, our victories over evil thoughts, for without the help of divine grace we are weak and powerless.

OBSCENE CONVERSATIONS AND SONGS

"Be not seduced: evil conversations corrupt good morals" (I Cor. 15. 33).

Impurity being in itself so shameful, it would seem that no one would venture to take delight in conversing thereon, or in listening to such conversations. But there are shameless persons who find great pleasure in such conversations and even in the singing of obscene songs. Those who speak and sing about obscene things are guilty of giving scandal, and deserve to be called seducers of the innocent.

1. The scandal of such conversations and songs is almost irreparable. It is calculated to seduce and corrupt the young, the innocent. These discourses, these songs palliate the malice and shamefulness of the vice of impurity in a seductive and enticing manner, and by means of obscene jokes and anecdotes, words of double meaning and suggestive allusions, awaken impure representations, which afford the wicked food for sensual gratification, and instruct the innocent in the ways of vice, and corrupt their hearts and their morals. The sharper the dagger, the deeper the wound, and the more refined and suggestive such conversations or allusions, or songs, the more apt they are to deeply impress and take root in the minds and imaginations of the young. "His words are smoother than oil, and the same are darts" (Ps. 54. 22).

Whatever is apt to inspire pleasure in impurity cannot be said or sung, or wilfully listened to without grievous sin, without scandal. Those who speak of or sing about such matters have either a bad intention or a bad habit. If the former, they are seducers, scandal-givers, the very

agents of Satan for the ruin of souls. If the latter, they are bound to use efficient means to correct it; if they neglect doing so, they are equally guilty with those who do so with a bad intention. Words are the signs of thoughts as smoke is of fire. "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke 6. 45). The evil man is devoid of shame; he openly professes wickedness; he has no fear of God, who hears and despises him; he has no conscience, for he is wholly indifferent to the bad effects he may produce in his hearers, and to the injury he may do the innocent. He knows he is doing wrong, for he dares not indulge in such filth when respectable persons are present. "Of the fruits of a man's mouth shall his belly be satisfied, and the offspring of his lips shall fill him. Death and life are in the power of the tongue; they that love it, shall eat the fruits thereof" (Prov. 18. 20, 21). No one can speak or sing about things obscene without having corresponding thoughts; no one can hear or listen to such conversations or songs without being reminded of the obscene things themselves. How difficult, especially for the young, to eradicate the thoughts awakened by such discourses and songs! Most probably he who uses such language and sings such songs was led astray in the same way. "A man killeth through malice, and when the spirit is gone forth, it shall not return, neither shall he call back the soul that is received" (Wisd. 16. 14).

No matter how wicked are your companions, you cannot be justified in using such language, for it arouses impure thoughts and entices to impurity. "All uncleanness . . . let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5. 3). No one is excepted from this rule, be they married or single, old or young, vicious or innocent! In the ashes of burnt wood there is still

fire, and he who blows thereon and lays fresh fuel on it, causes a fresh fire to spring up. "Speech is a spark to move our heart" (Wisd. 2. 2). The pleasure those present take in listening to you is a sign of their susceptibility. "I stick fast in the mire of the deep, and there is no sure (secure) standing" (Ps. 68. 3). "Shun profane and vain babblings, for they grow much towards ungodliness, and their speech spreads like a cancer" (2 Tim. 2. 16, 17).

There are gatherings in which only one word suffices to turn the conversation to the most obscene subjects, for "birds of a feather flock together." One earnest Christian could easily put a stop to it! But "let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us everywhere leave tokens of joy, for this is our portion, this our lot" (Wisd. 2. 9). Every one is eager to pour a little more oil on the flames, and this all for fun! But "what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8. 37). No one can repair the injury done, for the evil impression is lasting, and the speaker cannot remove it by pious remarks or conversations, for he will only be laughed at! Perhaps by tears of penance? But he has led others astray! Bad words brought on bad thoughts in the innocent, then followed reflexion, then curiosity, then passion, then pleasure, then desire, then occasion, then the deed followed by many others! The garment of innocence can never be mended. The wound is incurable! Perhaps the victim is now confirmed in lust, or has died in sin, after leading others astray as he himself had been. You have perhaps amended your life, but the harm you have done your neighbor can never be repaired. "Their tongue is like a piercing arrow" (Jer. 9. 8).

2. He who approvingly listens to obscene conversations and songs, is already seduced, because he listens in silence, instead of preventing them; he listens wilfully, instead of shunning them; and soon he will join in them, instead of being ashamed of them. Such language is, in some manner, worse than the evil deeds which infuse shame into those

who commit them, whilst obscene talk excites the imagination; the deeds shock, but the words please and cause those present to drink in the poison as a delicious beverage!

Who are guilty of a culpable silence in this matter? Parents, superiors, those in authority, influential persons. To them God says: "I will require his blood from thy hand" (Ezech. 3. 18). But I do not want to be impolite! Blessed is he who is not ashamed of Jesus Christ, who has the moral courage to remonstrate against such filth!

You are bound to avoid the company of those who are wont to converse about obscene matters, whenever it is possible for you to do so. Do like Joseph, fleeing from the seducer! But if you cannot keep away, because you have to work among such a crowd, then if they show their sinfulness, show your virtue by taking no part in the conversation, by not wilfully listening to it. Beware of joining them in their laughter! Could you laugh if some one were threatening your life? They are threatening the life of your soul! Your pleased countenance would show the direction of your heart. Remember you cannot serve two masters. When obscene conversations are going on around you, remember that you must not find therein any matter for joking, for a pastime, for any laughter!" He who takes pleasure in the words," says St. Jerome, "is not far from the deed." Act like St. Bernardine of Siena in his youth, for his companions, when they saw him coming, would warn each other to cease speaking of obscene subjects. Imitate the youth St. Stanislaus, who was so horrified when an impure word or allusion was uttered in his presence that he would faint away.

3. Evil effects of obscene conversations and songs. In the first place, they are the ruin of good morals, for they rob the young of their innocence, which is the foundation of good morals; they corrupt the principles, which should be the rule of good morals. Secondly, they implant bad morals by robbing the hearers of modesty, which is the

safeguard of purity; they make a beaten track to evil company, infuse a love for vice, by making it appear delightful, so that the formerly innocent soon become adepts in vicious practices! "How is the gold become dim, the finest color is changed, and the stones of the sanctuary at the corners of every street?" (Lament. 4. 1). Formerly that person was so reserved, but is now so impudent; she was so shy of every look, now she is accustomed to obscene language; formerly she was so bashful in presence of one of the other sex, but now how free, how unrestrained, how dissipated! Formerly she considered such freedom of language so sinful, but now looks upon it as a pleasant pastime. Her ears are accustomed to obscenity, her eyes seek it, her tongue utters and sings it, and the more licentious it is, the more her heart enjoys it. Her first fall has been followed by many others, and the evil has taken deep root. What is once morally rotten, usually remains rotten! Woe to the seducer! Woe to the seduced! "The evil man obeyeth an unjust tongue, and the deceitful hearkeneth to lying lips" (Prov. 17. 4). "The impure tongue is an open tomb" (Ps. 5. 11). Woe to them during their life! All the good despise them as impure beasts, as attacked by a disgusting contagious disease, as agents of Satan! For them there is no more consolation, no more honorable pleasure or supernatural hope! Their life shall be filled with bitter moments, their conscience with frightful reproaches, their soul with sad memories! Woe to them in death, for terrible will be their remorse! Woe to them at judgment! The seducer shall then hear cries of vengeance from the parents whose children he corrupted, from the guardian angels of these little ones, from the blood of Jesus Christ which he has rendered vain for so many souls, and from the souls he has led astray!

"Set a watch to my mouth, and a door round about my lips" (Ps. 140. 3).

THE READING OF BAD BOOKS

1. We often hear these and similar assertions: "We live in an enlightened age. The human mind is progressive and should be emancipated from all ancient, obsolete, undue restrictions, for it is now fully able to judge for itself. Liberty of thought, liberty of speech, liberty of the press, is the offspring of modern civilisation. I read both sides, the *pro* and the *con,* so that I may not remain behind the age, but may keep up with the times, with modern progress. I am free to read what I like. I am old enough to know what is good and what is bad for me. I am well qualified to judge for myself. I am my own master; it is nobody's business what I read. I need relaxation; I cannot always work or pray." Well, how much do you pray?

"I read out of curiosity, to be up-to-date in everything." But why read such stuff?

"I read to acquire a knowledge of mankind." But fiction, being fiction and not reality, can give you only a fictitious knowledge of men.

"I read those books on account of their fine style." You are like a man who likes a good cake and, seeing a number of fine cakes immersed in the mire, picks them up and eats them!

"I read those books to acquire a fine style." What profit has your style derived from such filthy and erroneous matter? I suppose you thought more of gratifying your morbid curiosity in reading such trash than of analyzing its style and trying to conform yours to it. And even if you derived any profit therefrom for your style, it was at too great an expense, for it cost you your lively faith, your innocence, your virtue; irreparable expenses for you.

"Religious and pious books are dry and poorly written." Where did you find that out? Surely not from reading many of them.

"I read those books to drive away the blues, to drown my troubles." And with what success? Tell me candidly, whether it would not be better and more consoling and satisfactory for you to say a few prayers, to visit our divine Saviour in the Sacrament of His love, to bear your troubles for the love of Jesus crucified. Try it and you will be astonished at the good results.

"I know my religion; the books I read can do me no harm." We shall now see that you are mistaken.

2. Bad books, bad pamphlets, bad papers are one of the greatest scourges of religion, of morality, of society itself. Reading is food for the mind. Our mind or reason is the guide of our will, of our conduct. Bad reading of every kind poisons the mind. "The just man liveth by faith" (Rom. 1. 17). But bad books destroy the reader's faith, either directly or indirectly; directly, if they treat of theological or philosophical subjects, for they fill the mind with false principles; indirectly, if they sap true morality, like a large number of novels, because they corrupt the reader's morals, and corruption of morals destroys first the reader's practical faith and gradually his theoretical faith, that is his belief in the doctrines of faith. Let us bear in mind that in this life we have nothing greater, nothing more precious than the gift of faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebr. 11. 6), and save our soul (Mark 16. 16). Bad books are the scourge of morality, for religion is the basis of morality; there is no such a thing as morality without God honored as supreme Lawgiver, and therefore no morality without religion, for it alone teaches us to give due honor to God. Bad books are the scourge of society, for the basis of human society is necessarily morality and religion, as even the pagans of old admitted. Therefore bad books, by undermining religion, undermine

all morality and the welfare and permanence of society. Bad books are the scourge of the family. The family is the result of marriage, which should necessarily be holy and indissoluble. The children owe their parents respect, obedience and love. But what do bad books teach? They teach that marriage is a mere contract, and therefore dissoluble; that it is not holy, but only a means of gratifying the passions, of promoting temporal interests; they deal in adultery which they call gallantry, praise divorce as a progress of civilisation, free love as a want of nature; they decry virtue and piety as chimeras, as hypocrisy, bigotry, and modesty and purity as a weakness, as contrary to nature; and ridicule the parents who require subordination and moral behavior from their children.

3. The usual effects of the passionate reading of works of fiction, on account of their sentimental style, their pictures of profane, passionate love, of the love of the sensual man, their making the gratification of the passions the highest possible enjoyment. All this tends to crush out heroic virtue, all true manliness, and leads, first, to loss of innocence and corruption of heart; the heart once corrupt the reader soon becomes disgusted with all serious reading, such as history, religious books; then follows gradual loss of faith, disinclination to honest labor, to the practice of the domestic virtues, a sort of frenzy for pleasure and romantic adventures, indifference to reputation, loss of bodily and mental health, and finally disgust for everything and even for life; and for many the end is suicide!

4. Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you think, what you believe, and what you feel, for bad reading ruins both the soul and the body. The eye reads, the memory retains, the imagination represents, the sensuality is excited, the reason is led astray, and the will follows the reason. Hence, in the first place, the loss of faith results from reading books that misrepresent the Catholic faith, its doctrines and practices and the clergy. Secondly, the

passionate reading of novels and the like results, as we have just seen, in the loss of purity and modesty and in its consequences. Bad reading does not at once end in the loss of faith and innocence; nor does it usually at first make a bad impression on the reader, but awakens his curiosity and urges him on to continue the reading. It is like the battering-ram of the ancient Romans. By means of repeated blows of this engine of war against the thickest and strongest walls of a city, the walls would be battered down in the course of time, and thus the Roman army could enter through the breach and capture the city. In like manner, by repeatedly reading bad and dangerous books the virtue and faith of the reader will soon be battered down and unbelief and vice will find an unobstructed entrance into the mind and heart of the reader. Thirdly, experience proves that the passionate reading of works of fiction is injurious to the nervous system of the young, induces insomnia, and renders them unfit for domestic life, and not unfrequently leads to sinful habits, to insanity, and even to suicide.

5. The habit of novel reading by instilling into the mind fictitious ideas of real life, of the family, leads in contracting marriage to disobey the laws of the Church and even the laws of sound, common sense, for fiction deprives marriage of its very object, of its dignity, and banishes all really good motives for contracting it; therefore, such readers usually contract unhappy marriages, and, when married, do not rear their children, so as to secure either their temporal or eternal welfare!

6. The reading of bad books is very injurious to the Church. Such books declaim against and ridicule virginity, modesty, piety, self-denial, penance, humility and other virtues and laud pride, ambition, dangerous and sinful pleasures, the gratification of sensuality. They teach that it matters not what one believes, provided he is honest,

that it is unmanly to submit one's reason to the teachings of the Church, and that every one is free to judge for himself in all matters whatever. In a word, such books so abound in false principles, that their readers are gradually led into unbelief and even into hatred of the Church and her teaching.

7. Bad books are most hurtful to the state. By their false teaching concerning marriage they undermine the family, and do great injury to the state for the family is the basis of society, since society, or the state, is composed of families and is perpetuated only by its families. They teach not only the lawfulness of divorce, but go so far as to make it appear advisable and even necessary, and thus aim at the destruction of society. Moreover, they advocate and spread the false principles of secret societies, which are subversive of all order and authority, and are filled with the praises of men whose lives were filled with immoral and scandalous practices.

8. Bad books are hurtful to all readers. Three things are required to produce a bad effect: 1, a thing that is bad or injurious in itself; 2, a thing that is liable to be injured; 3, the union of both together. The principles taught by the authors of bad books undermine the faith; their descriptions have an immoral tendency, and their style is usually fascinating, blinding and seductive. The reader's faith lacks firmness, his virtue is inconstant and easily ruined, and he is easily impressed, enticed and led away by descriptions of things or events that appeal to his passions. Hence such readers will be carried away by the reading of bad books either to infidelity or immorality, or rather to the loss of both their innocence and their faith. Those whose faith and virtue are firm and constant, never read bad books, for they abhor them. The readers of bad books are not angels, but have strong and unsubdued passions; they are not well grounded in their faith, for they

have only a confused idea of what it teaches; hence they are both morally and mentally unfit to withstand the bad effects of such reading.

9. Cure for Bad Reading. In the first place, you must put away, or rather destroy such books, as the Christians at Ephesus did in the time of St. Paul: "Many of them who had followed curious arts, brought together their books, and burnt them before all; and counting the price of them, they found the money to be fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19. 19). How dare you keep what you should not read, and give occasion to others to read such books! You have no right to give away, to sell, to lend, to borrow or praise such books! This obliges you under pain of mortal sin! A pagan author, Valerius Maximus, says of a certain pagan nation: "They would not suffer the minds of their children to be imbued with such books, lest they should do greater harm to their morals than afford benefit to their minds." The infidel Diderot, the writer of so many bad books, seeing one day his daughter reading one of his own books, snatched it out of her hands and cast it into the fire, for, although he wrote books to corrupt the faith and morals of others, he did not wish to have his own daughter's faith and morals corrupted! He also took great care of her religious education and was accustomed to teach her the catechism regularly. The great infidel, Jean Jacques Rousseau, who by his writings ruined the faith and morals of his cotemporaries and prepared the way for the old French Revolution, was corrupted at the age of seven years by reading the novels left by his late deceased mother! On the other hand, what wonderful conversions have been wrought through the reading of good books! St. Augustine, who was converted by reading the life of St. Paul, the first hermit, mentions two courtiers of the Roman emperor who were converted by reading the life of the Abbot St. Antony of Egypt. St. Columban was converted by reading the life of St. Mary of Egypt, the peni-

tent; and St. Ignatius by reading the Lives of the Saints.

Good books instruct the ignorant, admonish the slothful, stir up the indifferent, stimulate the careless, correct the erring, and raise up the fallen! You should have in your homes a number of good Catholic books, and read them at least on Sundays. You should support the Catholic press by subscribing to some Catholic Magazine and to at least one Catholic paper. "The best and most intelligent Catholics," says the New Mission Book, "are usually those who read good Catholic books and papers. They take an interest in their faith; they know and appreciate it; they are also able to explain and defend it and they are always to be relied on when there is question of making sacrifices to maintain and spread their holy faith."

Additional Thoughts on the Same Subject.

1. No one would like to taste poison to see how it tastes. In like manner, no one should read a bad book out of mere curiosity about its contents.

2. St. Bernard says: "Vain reading begets vain thoughts." Bad reading, therefore, begets evil thoughts.

3. St. Augustine says: "By bad reading we do not acquire eloquence nor a fine style, but become vicious thereby, and learn to know evil without abhorring it, to speak of it without shame, to commit it without restraint."

4. St. Jerome says: "Is it necessary for thee to plunge into the mire to pick up a bit of gold ore, when thou canst get a quantity of it elsewhere?"

5. St. Thomas says: "The reading of profane books, so pleasant to worldlings, corrupts the morals of the young, leads men to worldliness, sensual love and vice."

6. The Board of health makes strict regulations to prevent the spread of contagious diseases; in like manner, it is the duty of the Church to prevent the spreading of unbelief and vice among her children.

7. A fine style in a bad book is like a magnificent dress worn by a harlot.

8. Would you drink a delicious and sweet beverage mingled with a deadly poison?

9. No sane man would seek a healthy plant in a field of poisonous weeds.

10. "It is God who speaks to us, when we read a good book," says St. Jerome.

OCCASIONS OF SIN

"He that loveth danger, shall perish in it" (Eccli. 3. 27). "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the doors of her house" (Prov. 5. 8). "Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent, for if thou comest near them, they will take hold of thee" (Eccli. 21. 2).

1. An occasion of sin, says St. Charles, is whatever induces us to commit mortal sin, either by directly causing us to fall into sin, or drawing us by its presence into sin, so that the confessor has sufficient reason to fear that, on account of our past evil habits, or our natural weakness, we cannot keep from falling into sin as long as we do not avoid its occasion. The occasion of sin is either remote or proximate. The remote occasion does not possess so much attraction to sin as to endanger our falling into a grievous sin, and, therefore, is not necessarily to be avoided. The proximate or near occasion of sin is either necessary or wilful. The necessary is an occasion which, on account of the circumstances in which we are placed, we cannot avoid, unless with the greatest difficulty. There are certain occasions that are proximate for some persons and not for others; for instance, going into a saloon is a proximate occasion for one who is intemperate, that is, a drunkard, but not for those who are temperate, sober persons. There are certain things which are proximate occasions of sin in themselves and for all persons, such as indecent shows, obscene books and pictures. St. Alphonsus says that whatever often causes us to fall into mortal sin, whether it be a certain person, a certain place, or a certain thing, is a proximate or near occasion of sin for us.

2. Must we avoid the proximate or near occasion of sin? As to the necessary proximate occasion, we should make use of the necessary means to keep from falling into sin, such as prayer, frequent confession and holy Communion, serious reflection and meditation on the four last things, on the Passion of Jesus Christ, and avoid being alone with the person, and by such means counteract the attraction to sin and render the proximate occasion remote, and thus keep out of sin. But, says St. Alphonsus, "he who in a necessary proximate occasion always falls in the same way, even after using the requisite remedies or means of avoiding sin, cannot be absolved unless he quits such occasion, were this even to cost his life; for in such a case there is neither amendment nor hope of amendment. The reason for this is that we are obliged at every cost to avoid the proximate occasion of a formal sin; and, although, for a just cause, the occasion of sin may be permitted for a time, still the sin itself can never be permitted. And when experience proves that there is no hope of amendment, the danger becomes formal and inseparable from the sin, and must then be avoided at any temporal sacrifice whatever, even of life itself."

3. The wilful proximate or near occasion of sin must necessarily be avoided. Why were the Israelites forbidden to make images and to have any intercourse with pagans? Because these things were for them a proximate occasion of idolatry. "Can a man hide fire in his bosom and his garments not burn? Or can he walk upon hot coals and his feet not be burnt?" (Prov. 6. 27, 28). "Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee. Flee from it; pass not by it; go aside and forsake it" (Prov. 4. 14, 15). "He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise; a friend of fools (wicked men) shall become like to them" (Prov. 13. 20). "If thy right eye . . . if thy right hand scandalize thee," etc. (Mat. 5. 29, 30). "The most celebrated of the counsels of

Jesus Christ," says St. Bernardine, "and, as it were, the foundation of religion, is to flee the occasions of sin." "He that loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me," etc. (Mat. 10. 37). "You must not only shun adultery," says St. John Chrysostom, "but even avoid gazing wantonly; in order to keep from getting into a fight, you must avoid quarreling; in order to avoid drunkenness, shun banquets and the company of drunkards. Keep away from all danger, from all precipices. The best way to keep from sin is to shun its occasions."

4. In wilful proximate occasions the temptation is so violent and we are exceedingly weak; and, moreover, we cannot then lay claim to God's all-powerful grace, for "thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Mat. 4. 7). "He who does not keep out of the danger which he can avoid, does not hope in God, but actually tempts Him," says St. Augustine. When we are beset by a violent temptation, we shall surely yield to it, unless we are specially assisted by divine grace, for an object directly present to us acts far more powerfully and vividly on us than when absent. The hungry and the thirsty feel their hunger and thirst more when they perceive before them food and drink. The object that is present powerfully entices and allures the senses, fascinates the mind and forcibly draws the will. And, of itself, our will is weak indeed and unable to overcome a violent temptation, unless assisted by an efficacious divine grace. Since the fall of our first parents, men are by their sensual nature inclined to evil; this inclination to evil acts on our will like the attraction of gravitation acts on material objects. But what shall we say of those persons who are not only weak, but are weighed down by the remains of former sins, of former evil habits, whose spiritual and moral strength has been exhausted thereby, and who, nevertheless, wilfully seek the occasions of sins? On what do those persons rely for keeping from sins when they freely and deliberately frequent such occa-

sions, and yet protest, at the same time, that they do not intend or wish to sin? In the first place, do they imagine that the near occasion of sin is not powerful enough to make them fall? But does not a lamentable experience testify that persons far more holy than they have fallen deeply into vice by not avoiding similar occasions of sin? Some persons imagine they will find in such occasions only a little innocent satisfaction; but how grossly they are deceived! In the second place, do they suppose they shall have strength enough to resist and overcome the temptation? But why have so many holy and saintly persons left the world to live in solitude, out of reach of its dangers and pitfalls? Because they did not consider themselves strong enough to overcome its temptations and dangers. "I own my weakness," says St. Jerome. Are you stronger than this great saint? Perhaps you are used to such temptations; allurements to sin no longer make an impression on you! Perhaps also by your austerities you have subdued your passions and overcome all inclination to evil! To frequent such occasions of sin and not to fall into sin is a greater miracle than to raise the dead to life! In the Vandal persecution of the Catholics in Africa, the persecutors cut off the tongues of a number of confessors of the faith. God, nevertheless, enabled them to speak as well as before. Some of them, however, did not later on avoid the occasions of sin and fell thereby into sins of impurity; they thus lost the miraculous power of speech they had enjoyed. If even confessors of the faith, by not keeping from the occasions of sin, fell deeply into sin, how can you, who are so careless, so cold in the service of God, expect to remain unscathed in the wilful occasions of sin? In the third place, you imagine that in wilful occasions of sin the grace of God will keep you from falling into sin. "Very rash is he," says St. Cyprian, "who endeavors to pass through unscathed, where he knows that others have fallen." God helps only those who really desire His help;

but those who do not do what they can do themselves, do not desire Him to help them to keep from sin, for if they did not wish to sin, they would not place themselves unnecessarily in the danger of committing it. "God commanded His angels to care for thee *in thy ways*" (Ps. 90. 11), but *not in precipices!* He who wilfully frequents the occasion of sin, "shall be disappointed in his hope, and shall be precipitated in the sight of all" (Job 40. 28). "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it" (Eccli. 3. 27). "Impurity," says St. Jerome, "is learned by gazing on it; and they who were chaste when they went to that play (entertainment, etc.), returned unchaste." "You cannot overcome temptation when you are alone," says St. Bernard; "how will you be able to do so, when in the company of others who are striving to lead you into sin? You cannot do what is comparatively easy; and you wish me to believe that you are able to accomplish what is far more difficult!" And suppose you did not fall into sin when you were in the proximate occasion, are there no evil effects, or reminiscences, remaining in you?

5. With regard to sin we should act as we would do during the prevalence of a contagious disease. In the first place, we would flee those who are attacked by it, like Joseph fled from his tempter. Secondly, we should do what Jesus tells us to do, if our eye, our hand is an occasion of sin to us, to cut it off and cast it far from us, no matter how dear to us, how painful to separate ourselves therefrom. Thirdly, you should cast into the fire those books, pictures, presents, portraits that may be an occasion of sin to you.

PLEASURES AND AMUSEMENTS

1. Lawful Pleasures and Amusements. St. Paul bids us "rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice" (Phil. 4. 4). St. Paul was no Puritan, for he wished us to be joyful, to enjoy pleasure and not to serve God with a gloomy disposition; hence he bids us rejoice always, so that we may serve God cheerfully. But, at the same time, he requires us to rejoice and amuse ourselves as is becoming to followers of Jesus Christ, that is without offending God, for in all our rejoicing he tells us expressly: "Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh" (Phil. 4. 4, 5). That is, he demands of us to be modest, to avoid sin in all our pleasures and amusements and to remember, whilst we are enjoying ourselves, that God is present. If we follow this rule of conduct in all our pleasures, in all our amusements, we shall keep from sin, and all our rejoicing and enjoyment, joined to the good intention of pleasing God, will conduce even to our sanctification and salvation, and will be edifying to our neighbor. Such enjoyments will cause us to have a dislike for, and an aversion to, all unlawful and sinful pleasures and amusements, and fill us with an ardent desire for heaven's purest and most perfect pleasures.

2. An Amusement, or an Enjoyment, Is No Longer Proper for us, if it is beyond our means, if it is injurious to our health, to our virtue, to the spirit of charity or of devotion, to the glory of God, to our condition or state of life, if we are too fond of it or passionately attached to it, or if it is of too frequent occurrence. In this latter case it would be a sign that we are seeking to enjoy heaven on earth.

3. The Rule to Follow in Pleasures and Amusements, is to avoid all that are sinful or dangerous, and to keep out of not only bad, but also dangerous company, to avoid unbecoming places, unseasonable hours, and not to indulge in such pleasures too frequently, for their frequency would be a sign that we love them passionately, excessively, and "all excess, even in good things, is dangerous." We should scruple losing in frequent amusements our precious time which God has given us for our salvation; such a loss of time entails the neglect of duty, the omission of prayer and good works. Let us bear in mind that our duty as Christians requires us to follow Jesus Christ and deny ourselves and take up our cross after Him during all our life, so that we may be found worthy to reign with Him in heaven. If we frequently or constantly seek after pleasure, we shall become accustomed to an effeminate and careless life, and unfit to make the necessary efforts and sacrifices for our salvation, and shall fall into the vice of sloth, the parent of vice, for "Idleness hath taught much evil" (Eccli. 33. 29). This was the kind of life led by the rich man mentioned by our divine Saviour who, when he died, "was buried in hell," as he deserved to be!

4. Very Expensive Amusements Are Sinful, if they are beyond one's means, or if they are got up or enjoyed out of pride, for instance, to eclipse one's rivals, or to draw the admiration of the people. Very expensive amusements got up by a private person, even if not beyond his means, can hardly be excused from sin, for the rich should give abundant alms to the poor, to works of charity, of the propagation of the faith, such as poor missions among the heathen, in poor places, and the work of the Catholic press! Whilst you are making a great show of your wealth and enjoying yourself hugely, you a follower of Jesus Christ, how many poor are suffering even extreme want, how many poor sick are left to suffer and die in want of remedies and the necessaries of life! How unchristian, how inhu-

man not to think of them, not to help them! Think also of the souls you could help to save!

5. Dangerous Amusements. Although we cannot avoid every danger of sin, we can and must avoid the proximate or near occasion of sin, and we should not become an occasion of sin to our neighbor. It is our sacred duty to give always good example. Let us ever bear in mind that we are Christians and should not live like irrational animals and make use of every occasion to gratify our passions.

6. We Are Bound to Avoid Bad Plays in which profane and sinful love, seduction, divorce are held up to the admiration of the public, and are, therefore, suggestive of evil thoughts and deeds, and thereby make or leave an almost indelible impure impression on the mind and imagination of all present, and thus corrupt the innocent and confirm the impure in vice.

7. Balls and Dancing. Let us consult Holy Scripture and experience on this subject. "Use not much the company of her that is a dancer" (Eccli. 9. 4). We read in the Gospel that the dancing of Salome cost the life of the holy Precursor of our divine Saviour, St. John Baptist! Dina, the daughter of the patriarch Jacob, was ruined by going to dance at Sichem. St. Paul tells us expressly that we should not follow the fashions of worldlings in their amusements, such as plays and dancing: "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12. 2). The Holy Fathers all warn the faithful against dancing and dancers. "It is preferable," says St. Augustine, "to plough on Sunday than to dance." How many quarrels, jealousies, enmities, how much scandal and impurity result from balls! The girls, the women, usually go to balls only after spending hours in dressing, painting, curling, powdering and perfuming, in order to appear beautiful and lovely in the eyes of the men! The men go to balls to see, to flirt with and seduce the girls, the women. What snares both the sexes lay to

entrap each other! How many of the modern dances, especially the fashionable ones, are only impure allurements totally destructive of Christian modesty, and are the scandal and ruin of souls! All that are connected with balls are more or less guilty on account of this; parents, sons and daughters! The familiarity of the ball-room, especially in certain dances, is a dangerous occasion of sin. How dangerous, indeed, for a young man with strong inflammable passions, the sight and contact of a woman dressed in ball costume! The Holy Ghost warns us against this: "Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up" (Eccli. 9. 8). How dangerous for an unsophisticated girl possessed of a tender and loving heart, the deceitful and venomous words and the caressing touches of a designing man! A modest and good Christian young man approaches a young woman with modest reserve, restraint and respect. A pure, modest girl or woman, if approached or addressed too freely, will blush, turn pale, withdraw, conceal herself, showing, in every way possible, that purity is dearer to her than the honeyed words and the seductive flattery of a designing man.

8. Some persons allege that the gentle St. Francis de Sales permitted balls and dancing. True, but it was the balls and modest dancing in his day, and not the free, unrestrained, licentious balls and dancing of our day; and he permits the balls and dancing in his day only under certain conditions. Now listen attentively to his conditions, and then ask yourselves, whether you are willing to take part in the dancing under such conditions. "Whilst you are dancing," he says, "consider seriously, in the first place, how many souls are now in hell on account of balls; secondly, how many religious, how many pious persons are now engaged in chanting the praises of God, and how much better than I they spend their time; thirdly, whilst I am dancing and enjoying myself, there are thousands of sick persons enduring fearful pains; shall I not soon have

to suffer like them, when others will take my place in dancing; fourthly, Jesus and Mary see all that I am now doing; they know all my thoughts; fifthly, death is near and may at any moment overtake me."

9. True Joy, True Pleasure Is Found Only in God. Worldly pleasure is vain, and neither solid nor lasting, for it arises from the passions, from deceptive sources; and, as experience proves, it is inconstant. He who laughs to-day, will probably grieve to-morrow. Worldly pleasure is short and transitory; when too much protracted or too often repeated, it becomes irksome, insipid and even bitter. Though it tastes sweet, the after-taste is usually bitter!

10. Godly Joy and Pleasure Is Genuine and Constant; no creature can deprive us of it. No sorrow, no bodily pain can disturb it. The contentment and happiness of those who lead a holy life, cannot be marred or lessened by any amount of physical suffering or trials; on the contrary, the sufferings and trials borne for the love of Jesus crucified, only serve to increase it. Hence to the godly all evils become a source of merit for eternity.

Let us choose the better part of renouncing all sinful and dangerous pleasures, and of sacrificing now and then even some lawful pleasure or enjoyment for the sake and love of Jesus who was crucified and died for us, poor sinners; and great shall be your peace of mind and heart in this life and your reward in heaven. Amen.

VIRGINITY

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Mat. 5. 8).

1. Its excellence. Virginity is the best and happiest state of life. Not every single person is a virgin. There are certain persons who remain single, but not through a pure or virtuous intention. As to these latter God, at the general judgment "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of hearts" (1 Cor. 4. 5).

Who are virgins? Those who have remained pure and undefiled by the deeds of the flesh, and out of love of holy purity. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men" (Wisd. 4. 1). "The virgins," says St. Cyprian, "are the most illustrious portion of the flock of Christ." "You should appreciate the virgins," wrote St. Ignatius, the martyr, "as you do the priests of Jesus Christ." We can say of the virgins what our divine Saviour said of the angels. "Neither do they marry, nor are given in marriage, but they shall be (are) as the angels in heaven" (Mat. 22. 30). "The difference between the angels and the virgins," says St. Bernard, "consists not in virtue, but in happiness." In heaven the virgins enjoy a special glory, shared by no other saints. "And no man could say that canticle, but the hundred and forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. They are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first

fruits to God and to the Lamb. . . . They are without spot before the throne of God" (Apoc. 14. 3–5). They are the spouses of Christ: "I will espouse thee to Me forever" (Osee 2. 19). "The virgin thinketh of those things which are of the Lord" (1 Cor. 7. 34). Virginity is preferable to the state of marriage. They who, out of love of God, out of love of holy purity remain virgins "do better," says St. Paul, than those who marry (1 Cor. 7. 38). Virginity is preferable to all earthly goods; and, therefore, no temporal sacrifice is too great to preserve it.

2. Virgins, being human, have their passions, like their fellow-men, and are exposed to temptations, to the danger of forfeiting or losing their virginity. "The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job 7. 1). "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccli. 2. 1). The devil delights especially in tempting them, for he is an unclean spirit. Therefore, virgins, as well as other men, should heed the admonition of St. Peter. "Be sober and watch, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye, strong in faith" (1 Pet. 5. 8, 9). The world has also its temptations, especially for those virgins who are about to leave it for the religious life. And like St. Paul, they have to combat their domestic enemy, their own flesh. "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7. 23–25). Virginity is, indeed, a great treasure, but "we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4. 7).

But do not be discouraged, for Jesus Christ is your Spouse, who says to you: "Have confidence; I have conquered the world" (John 16. 33). "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12. 9). And how will you be

able to obtain this necessary grace? 1. In the first place, by constant prayer, for prayer is more necessary to chastity than to any other virtue, because in the practice of no other virtue is human nature so weak, so helpless of itself, and therefore so greatly in need of divine grace. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4. 7). "I knew," says the wise man in Holy Writ, "that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it. . . . I went to the Lord and besought Him with my whole heart" (Wisd. 8. 21). 2. Secondly, humility is indispensable to the preservation of chastity, for "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5. 5). "Virginity," says St. Augustine, "should not only be preached in order to inspire its love, but also be admonished, lest it be puffed up." 3. In the next place, constant watchfulness is necessary, that we may be on our guard against temptations and keep away from all occasions of sin. In the warfare against our animal nature the cowards are the best soldiers and are always sure of victory. We must also flee idleness and vain curiosity as occasions to violent temptations to impurity. Let us be always usefully occupied and restrain our curiosity. 4. Fourthly, mortification is an important means of preserving chastity. "This kind of devil," says our divine Saviour, "is cast out only by fasting and prayer" (Mat. 9. 28). "Mortify your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3. 5). 5. Fifthly, frequent confession, and frequent, and even daily holy Communion. Holy Communion is "the corn of the elect and the wine springing forth virgins" (Zach. 9. 17). 6. Finally, a constant and tender devotion to the Virgin of virgins. Let us often say to her: "O Lady, remember that I am thine; wherefore guard and protect me as thy own property."

THE VICE OF ANGER

"Be angry, and sin not" (Ps. 4. 5).

1. ANGER IS TWO-FOLD, LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL. Lawful or just anger is zeal for the honor of God, and tends to put a stop to, or prevent, or punish what is sinful. We have examples of it in our divine Saviour driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, in St. John Baptist reproving the Pharisees and calling them a "race of vipers," and in Moses throwing down the tables of the Law of God, when he perceived the idolatry of the Israelites. We have also examples of pious and zealous priests rebuking sinners for their sins.

2. UNLAWFUL, OR SINFUL, ANGER arises from or is prompted by passion. It is an inordinate and vehement displeasure which incites to revenge for an offense, real or imaginary, or which is aroused because things did not, or do not, fall out as desired. Such anger is always sinful, when wilful. If we try our best at once to check or suppress our anger as soon as we perceive it, we not only do not commit a sin, but we even perform a meritorious act of self-denial.

3. There are THREE DEGREES OF WILFUL ANGER. The first degree is the anger that is merely interior and is kept from breaking out in speech or action. The second degree is the anger that breaks out in words, in abuse, accompanied by cursing, etc. The third degree is the anger that breaks out in actions.

4. CAUSES OF ANGER. In the first place, anger is the outcome of one's natural inclinations, or temperament. The choleric is naturally inclined to anger. Constant efforts,

assisted by divine grace, can alone enable him to overcome his natural irascibility. The fiercer his struggle, the greater also his merit. Secondly, anger is a vice, that is, an habitual sin. The passion of anger already makes its appearance in infancy, and if not at once checked by the infant's parents, their cherished idol will be spoiled in childhood, will become irascible in youth, and its inclination to anger will soon became a second nature, so that it can no longer be rooted out. Thirdly, anger arises also from inordinate self-love, from pride, from lust, from self-will, from unrestrained ambition. Under the influence of any of these passions a man brooks no restraint, no opposition, no contradiction, and becomes sensitive beyond all control.

5. Anger Makes Man an Enemy of Himself. "Anger," says St. Gregory, "makes the heart beat and the body tremble; it is apt either to tie up the tongue altogether or to loosen it beyond measure. It reddens the face, gives a wild and fierce expression to the eyes, disfigures the countenance, and makes a person appear as if bereft of his senses, and, like drunkenness, it sometimes makes him unconscious of what he is saying or doing." An irascible young man got one day so angry, that it made him very sick. The physician both cured and converted him by making him look at his distorted and horridly angry features in a mirror during a fit of anger. Anger often causes fever from excitement, exhausts the vital energy, brings on diseases of the brain, heart failure and sudden death, as experience proves. "He that is patient is governed with much wisdom; but he that is impatient (and gets angry) exalteth his folly" (Prov. 14. 29). "Anger," says St. Basil, "inflames the tongue and gives license to the mouth. Insults, abuse and cursing are its offspring. The irascible man lives in 'hot water' and keeps others in it. The spirit of Satan dwells in him; and there is no peace, no happiness either for himself or for his companions." The angry man

is like a wild beast, for he is not governed by reason. Anger is also like vinegar which sours the vessel it is in and also all that comes in contact with it. "A passionate man provoketh quarrels, and he that is easily stirred up to wrath, shall be more prone to sin" (Prov. 29. 22). "Let every man be slow to anger, for the anger of man worketh not the justice of God" (James 1, 19, 20).

6. The Angry Man Offends God who commands us to be meek and patient. Anger offends charity for, says St. Paul, "charity is not provoked to anger, but beareth all things" (1 Cor. 13. 5). "I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment" (Mat. 5. 21). "Learn of Me," says our divine Saviour elsewhere, "because I am meek" (Mat. 11. 29).

7. Remedies of Anger. In the first place we should constantly watch over ourselves and be on our guard against this vice, lest we be surprised by the emotions of anger. It behooves us at once to repress such emotions, otherwise they may soon acquire such strength as to be beyond our control. "Forestall all anger," says St. Francis de Sales, "by at once manfully resisting and conquering your feelings." Secondly, since without the assistance of divine grace we are powerless to master our emotions, we must have recourse to prayer, as soon as feelings of anger arise within us, and even whenever we foresee that an occasion of anger is likely to arise. We should continue to pray as long as we feel irritated. Let us, like the apostles when in danger of the storm, go at once to Jesus, saying: "Lord, save us, for we are in danger of perishing," for He alone can calm our irritation as He calmed the storm. So long as we feel disturbed, we should say nothing, and do nothing; but make acts of meekness towards those against whom we are irritated. If we then speak or do anything, we shall only add fuel to the fire, and increase instead of extinguishing it. "When some one speaks harshly to us," says St. Alphonsus, "we should invariably

give him a gentle reply; but if we are angry, we should remain silent." Thirdly, we should endeavor to practise humility and to consider ourselves as the worst of sinners and, therefore, as deserving of contempt. By this means we shall not so easily feel hurt by what our fellow-men may say or do to us. Finally, let us imitate Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour and Model by practising forbearance, patience and meekness towards all men, whatever may be their conduct in our regard. "When we consider," says St. Teresa, "the countless injuries offered to our Redeemer and the saints, we should blush with shame at being so sensitive, irritable and revengeful."

8. Objections. 1. "Anger comes so suddenly upon me, that I cannot help getting angry." A person may feel angry and yet commit no sin, if his angry feeling does not become wilful; and it does not become wilful, if as soon as we are aware of the angry feeling, we try to suppress it and say in our heart: "My Jesus, give me patience; Mary, my Mother, help me to be patient, to overcome this angry feeling." 2. "But I cannot punish my children without getting angry." If your children have done wrong and deserve punishment, and your anger is not really passionate, but only a displeasure at their fault, your anger is not sinful, for it is not passionate; but if it is passionate, you should strive to get calm, to overcome your angry feeling, and not punish them until you can do so without passion, for a passionate punishment is sinful and, at the same time, bears no fruit with the children. 3. "I am too deeply hurt, and cannot remain indifferent." Although you feel deeply hurt and full of angry feelings, you must try at once to overcome them by fervent and repeated prayer; if you do not, such feelings will turn to hatred, and perhaps numberless other sins. You should heed the injunction of St. Paul: "Let not the sun go down on your anger" (Eph. 4. 26). 4. "I try to suppress my anger, but I cannot; it is too strong for me." You can overcome your anger by pray-

ing earnestly and persistently for the grace to do so, for St. Paul says: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4. 13). Try also this means: pray much for those who have deeply wounded your feelings, and also try to find the means the saints use for taking revenge, that is, do as much good to them as you can possibly do. Try this, and your angry feelings will vanish!

ANGER AND MEEKNESS

"We cease not to pray for you . . . that you may walk worthy of God, . . . fruitful in every good work . . . in all patience and long-suffering with joy" (Col. 1. 9–11).

I. Anger.

1. Anger interiorly excites us in a violent manner, disturbs our senses, agitates our whole being as with a burning fever, which more or less leads our reason astray, and produces in us a kind of general inflammation.

2. The angry man is known by his snappish, sharp, disconnected speech, wild, convulsive gestures, abusive epithets, imprecations, curses, blasphemies and threats! He acts like a wild beast, like a maniac!

3. The irascible man often is aroused by mere innocent causes, which in themselves are not in the least calculated to excite or irritate; for instance, a slight contradiction, a harmless cause, a mere imagination.

4. There is nothing more humbling and wounding to man's reason and the dignity of his soul. Our very self-respect requires us to master and control our feelings, to be always moderate, calm and self-possessed in speech and conduct. But he who yields to angry feelings, acts like a wild beast, becomes brutal. He stifles the voice of reason, loses all control over himself, and becomes blind and deaf to reason, to self-interest, to charity, friendship, duty, gratitude, to respect for authority, to prayers and entreaties.

5. He who yields to anger even only once, may have cause for remorse during the remainder of his life. Anger robs a man of peace and contentment, and not unfrequently brings on insanity, or sudden death.

6. It is hard to live with a hot-tempered person. How must a family suffer which has such a member! How sinful is the vice of anger and unworthy of a Christian, of a follower of the meek Jesus "who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, threatened not!" (1 Pet. 2. 23).

7. We should never speak and never act when we are under the influence of passion, but should wait until we have entirely recovered our calm and self-possesion.

8. The irascible should be firmly resolved to amend, and therefore constantly watch over themselves and be on their guard against the passion of anger. They should examine their conscience to find out how they may be able to avoid the occasions of getting angry. They should, moreover, pray earnestly to God for strength to overcome their irascibility, and this especially when they feel their anger rising.

II. Meekness.

1. Meekness implies self-possession and calm amid every kind of provocation. No virtue is more ravishing, more angelic, more godlike. Perfect meekness is a rarer virtue than even perfect chastity.

2. Meekness regulates and governs all our interior emotions, and all the exterior expressions of our interior emotions; it keeps us ever calm and serene in all events, allows no cloud or fog to obscure our reason, no storm to arise. Like the purest water, it is as clear as crystal. It is as smooth as a body of water without ripple. The temper of the meek man is never ruffled.

3. Christian meekness is a supernatural virtue, the product of divine grace. It is supernatural in its origin, in its motives, in its end, like all the other Christian virtues.

4. Meekness is the very essence of humility, the very cream or flower of charity. It makes no exception of persons. It manifests and perfects itself amid the thorns of

abuse and ill-treatment, insult, blows. The meek man's tone of voice, his whole appearance and demeanor, his looks, his smile, all his features bear a quasi-divine and inimitable impress.

5. Meekness is not weakness nor lack of spirit. It agrees very well with firmness, with authority, and is their safeguard. It pertains to authority to command, govern, counsel, encourage, correct. It best commands with meekness, with calm. It best counsels as friendly and benevolent. Encouragement best finds its way to the heart when accompanied by kindness. And the best and most effective correction must proceed from kindness and moderation. In a word, to succeed, authority must be inseparable from meekness.

6. Examples of meekness. Our divine Saviour. Moses: "Moses was a man exceedingly meek above all men that dwelt upon the earth" (Numb. 12. 3). St. Bernard, who was at first very strict and exacting towards his subjects, soon found out his mistake; he then treated them with wonderful meekness and soon won their hearts. St. Francis de Sales is universally known as a model of meekness. St. Vincent de Paul. St. Alphonsus de Liguori.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land" (Mat. 5. 4), that is, the hearts of all.

To overcome the passion of anger and acquire the virtue of meekness and patience, is the work of a life-time. We read that the saints had to labor earnestly twenty, thirty, forty or more years to overcome their temper and acquire the virtues of meekness and patience.

PATIENCE

"Take all that shall be brought upon thee; and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience, for gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation" (Eccli. 24. 5).

1. PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE which enables us to bear sufferings and trials for the love of God. This virtue has three degrees. He possesses the first degree who, although he feels dejected on account of his bodily sufferings or his trials, nevertheless, out of humility, keeps silence about them and would rather continue to suffer than be freed therefrom by committing a sin. He possesses the second degree of this virtue, who, although he does not desire sufferings and trials, nevertheless willingly accepts and bears them, when they come to him, because it pleases God to have him to bear them. He possesses the third or highest degree of patience, who actually desires sufferings and trials, and rejoices when they are sent him, since it is God's will. "True patience," says St. John Chrysostom, "consists in loving what we have to bear."

2. PATIENCE IN SUFFERINGS AND TRIALS IS A DUTY of all men towards God, and a mark of faith in His Providence, and a proof that they also will what God wills for them and sends them. Patience is a duty which we owe to ourselves, for it is the best means of lightening our sufferings and of finding means to relieve them. Impatience serves only to aggravate and protract the suffering. Patience is like an anæsthetic which deadens the pain, or prevents us from feeling it. Patience is also a duty we owe to those around us, who may wound our feelings, or in some manner or other cause us pain. We can then return them good for evil; avoid proving burdensome to those

who wait on us or nurse us in our illness. Let us bear in mind that "charity beareth all things . . . endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13. 7).

3. Motives for Patience. 1, Patience is a sublime virtue, which causes us to resemble our divine Saviour and the martyrs. "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8. 29). "He who is truly patient in bearing all sufferings and trials," says St. Gregory, "is like the martyrs; although his life is not taken away by the sword," yet like them, he suffers for the love of Jesus Christ. 2, Patience is a very effective means of correcting our faults and expiating them, and thus shortening our purgatory. Moreover, it strengthens our virtues, or, as Zeno of Verona declares, "it is the guardian of the virtues." Patience lays up for us treasures in heaven, and is a pledge of our heavenly reward. 3, Patience is calculated to inspire us with joy and consolation, for it is both a sign that we love God and an effect of His love for us. "Persevere under discipline (suffering). God dealeth with you as with His sons; for what son is there whom the father doth not correct? . . . All chastisement for the present seemeth not to bring with it joy; but afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice" (Hebr. 12. 7, 11). "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation (suffering) should try thee" (Tob. 12. 13). 4, Patience purifies and tries the children of wrath (sinners), for they deserve sufferings as a due punishment for their sins. The sinner must undergo temporal punishment as an expiation of his sins, after they have been forgiven, either in this life or in the next. It is to his advantage to undergo it in this life by patience in his sufferings and trials. 5, Since our life on earth is necessarily beset with sufferings and trials, we need patience to bear them and merit through them heavenly bliss. "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14. 21).

4. Means of practising patience. In the first place, as you have just heard, trials and sufferings are our part in this life; we cannot escape them; and on our patience depends our lot in eternity. "Remember," says St. John Chrysostom, "that whether thou be willing or unwilling, thou must suffer; if thou art patient, it will profit thee; if thou murmur, thou must bear two-fold. Is it not preferable to bear patiently?" Secondly, we should always be prepared for sufferings and trials, and have our mind made up to bear them patiently when they come, and consider them as marks of divine favor. The saints were always eager for them, and when they had but little to suffer, they complained to God, as if He had forgotten or ceased to love them. He who bears his sufferings and trials patiently and cheerfully, gives greater honor to God than if he performed many miracles; in fact, we can give to God no greater honor in this life than by our patience in sufferings and trials. Thirdly, let us reflect on our numerous sins and on how patiently and kindly God bears with us and treats us who have so often deserved hell. Had God on such and such a day, in such and such a place struck us dead as we deserved, where should we now be? Hence our sufferings and trials in this life, were they multiplied a thousand times, would bear no comparison with the punishments we deserve for our sins. "As an inducement to be patient," says St. Isidore, "let us call to mind that we have much less to bear than we deserve." Fourthly, let us consider God's longanimity in our regard, and be induced thereby to bear patiently with the faults and offenses of our neighbor; if we do not, we shall undergo the same punishment that was meted out on the servant who after having been forgiven his immense debt of ten thousand talents, refused to forgive, or even to be patient with his fellow-servant, who could not repay him a paltry sum! Fifthly, in all our trials and sufferings let us

look at the crucifix and meditate on the fearful sufferings of Jesus for our sins. "When in suffering," says St. Francis de Sales, "look at the crucifix and reflect on the sufferings of Jesus Christ and their cause," your sins. Finally, let us often reflect on the intense sufferings of the holy souls in purgatory for the same venial faults we commit daily without fear or scruple! "If you cannot bear your sufferings on earth," says the Imitation, "what will you do in purgatory? Choose the lesser pain! To escape eternal punishment, bear patiently and cheerfully temptations, trials and sufferings."

5. "Our patience," says St. Gregory, "is tried by the devil in temptation; by our neighbor in abuse, contempt, want of charity, and justice; by God in sickness, in punishments and trials." "Count it all joy," says St. James (1. 2–4), "when you shall fall into diverse temptations (sufferings), knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." "Do not lose your confidence," says St. Paul, "because it hath a great reward; for patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebr. 10. 35, 36). "Patience," says St. Francis de Sales, "is a more sure pledge of eternal bliss than the other virtues, for we must have patience not only with others, but also with ourselves." Let us remember that every rose has its thorns. In like manner, the life of every man has its crosses. "He who is very patient," says the Imitation, "will enjoy much peace, for he thereby conquers himself, lords over the world, is a friend of Jesus and an heir of heaven." "He is truly patient," says St. Francis de Sales, "who does not complain of his sufferings, nor desire sympathy." Sufferings and trials are bitter to our poor human nature; but just as bees extract honey even from bitter flowers and plants, so does patience extract peace of mind in this life

and ineffable joys in the next from momentary trials and sufferings. "That which is at present a momentary and light tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4. 17).

THE VICE OF GLUTTONY

"Be not greedy in any feasting, and pour not out thyself upon any meat; for in many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished; but he that is temperate, shall prolong life" (Eccli. 37. 32–34).

Gluttony is an inordinate, unrestrained desire of eating and drinking, on account of the taste and renewed gratification caused thereby. In other words, it is an overindulgence especially in delicacies, costly viands and beverages, in and out of seasonable time and in a greedy manner. Like the other vices "it is acquired gradually," says St. Ambrose, "and the appetite of the glutton becomes insatiable."

Gluttony darkens the mind and tends to materialize man altogether. Just as clouds hide the sun from our view, so does a full stomach exhale vapors that obscure the mind. St. Basil asks: "Why feast so much on meat? Knowest thou not that the fatter thy body, the heavier the prison of thy soul?"

Gluttony weakens the health, makes man more liable to disease and shortens his life. "By surfeiting many have perished; but he that is temperate shall prolong life" (Text). Is not the physician called much oftener to the rich than to the poor? And why? Because the rich have more means to gratify their appetite than the poor, and are therefore more liable to contract disease than the poor.

The glutton squanders his time and his money to indulge the insatiable cravings of his appetite, and is usually addicted to drunkenness which leads him to indulge in obscene talk, excites his impure passions, rouses him to anger and quarreling, hardens his heart, makes him oblivious of

his religious duties, and precipitates him into temporal and eternal misfortune!

The glutton is like swine which live in order to eat; but other men eat in order to live, that is, to keep up their health and strength and prolong their life. The glutton is also like fowls, the sole occupation of which is eating or looking out for something to eat. The glutton is fond of good cheer and is always thinking of eating and drinking, and of rendering food more savory and palatable.

Many are lost through the vice of gluttony, for, says St. Paul, "many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now I tell you weeping), that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly" (Phil. 3. 18, 19). "Hear thou, my son," says the Holy Ghost, "and be wise; and guide thy mind in the way. Be not in feasts of great drinkers, nor in their revelings, who contribute flesh to eat; because they that give themselves to drinking and club together, shall be consumed" (Prov. 23. 19–21). Let us now hear the Prince of the apostles on this subject: "They have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings. . . . Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them into the same confusion of riotousness. . . . They shall render an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Pet. 4. 3–5). And the great Apostle of the Gentiles says: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink" (Rom. 14. 17). "The works of the flesh are manifest; they are . . . drunkenness, revelings and such like, of which I foretell you . . . that they who do such things, shall not obtain the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5. 19–21).

"Gluttony and intemperance," says St. Augustine, "are the roots of crimes and the sources of vices." "Gluttony is the source of impurity," says St. Vincent Ferrer, the great missionary of the first part of the fifteenth cen-

tury; "he who pampers his body will soon become the miserable slave of lust."

The Holy Fathers give us the following marks of gluttony: *Too soon; too often; too delicately; too much; greedily; too carefully.* He who can never get his food too soon, or often enough, and is always squeamish as to the quality of his food and the manner in which it is prepared, is a glutton. Also he is a glutton who overeats himself. Some people need more food than others, and many eat more than others usually do without being gluttons. Hence St. Francis de Sales says: "Often he who has eaten more than others, has denied himself more than they who have eaten less. We should rise from our meals before we are perfectly satisfied." He who always eats too greedily is a glutton, and likewise he who always picks out the best things.

The sin of Eve was, not only a sin of disobedience, but also of gluttony, for she was then not hungry. Let us not imitate her, but follow the admonition of St. Paul: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh in its lusts" (Rom. 13. 14) by indulging in gluttony. "Whether you eat or drink . . . do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10. 31). Let us be moderate in eating and drinking, heeding the counsel of St. John Climacus: "When about to drink something agreeable, let us be moderate, and advert in thought to the beverage offered to our divine Saviour on the cross." Jesus Christ has told us the end of the rich glutton and that of Lazarus, the poor half-starved sick beggar. Which is preferable?

Mortification, the Cure of Gluttony. He who wishes to follow Jesus Christ and enter heaven, must practise self-denial in all the things that may hinder his salvation. "If any one will come after Me," says Jesus, "let him deny himself and daily take up his cross and follow Me" (Luke 9. 23). St. Paul bids us "always to bear in

our body the mortification of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4. 10). "Mortify your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3. 5). "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. . . . They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and lusts" (Gal. 5. 17, 24).

Teaching of St. Alphonsus on the necessity of mortification. Either the soul will rule the body, or the body will rule the soul. He who is resolved to enjoy every lawful pleasure and gratification, and never to deny himself anything, is in danger of soon giving way to those that are unlawful and even very sinful. Mortification detaches us from sensual pleasures, which often wound, or even kill the soul. Among the mortifications it behooves us to perform is the mortification of our sense of taste, which directly inclines us to gluttony and also causes us to remain its slaves.

As it was the sin of Eve's gluttony that introduced sin and all physical evils into the world, the reform must begin by combating gluttony in all earnestness. "You must first combat gluttony," says St. Vincent Ferrer, "for if you do not overcome it, your labor to acquire virtue will be in vain." "The vice of gluttony," says St. Gregory, "wages war on us by forestalling the hours appointed for meals, by seeking delicate viands to gratify our sensuality, by requiring our food to be exquisitely seasoned, by excess in the quantity of food and drink, and more especially by eating greedily." Let us, then, mortify our appetite by not eating out of meal-time, unless it be necessary, by not seeking after delicacies and exquisitely prepared food, by not indulging in liquors, except when really necessary, by eating and drinking with moderation, and by eating slowly and properly masticating our food. This last requirement will prevent us from eating more than we need and will prove very conducive to our health. Finally, a very meritorious mortification and, at the same time, a very effective

cure of gluttony, consists in eating a little less of what we like very much, and a little more of what is not so agreeable to our taste. "Let us always bear in mind," says St. Francis de Sales, "that it behooves us to eat in order to live, and not to live in order to eat."

INTEMPERANCE

"Be ye sober and watch, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist ye, strong in faith" (I Pet. 5. 8, 9).

"Do not err, neither idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards shall possess the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6. 9, 10).

In exhorting us to resist the devil, the mortal enemy of our soul, St. Peter requires of us not merely a strong faith, but sobriety before all, because he that is not sober, is incapable of watching and guarding against the snares of the evil one and, therefore, becomes an easy prey to him and is liable to break all the commandments of God and His Church. St. Paul justly classes drunkards among the greatest and most infamous sinners, and repeatedly declares that they shall forever be excluded from the kingdom of God.

Drunkenness is a very great sin. Although we cannot sufficiently fathom its malice, we should, nevertheless, beware of exaggerating it, for there are other sins more grievous in themselves than even drunkenness. But when we consider the various vices in their consequences, experience shows us that no other vice is productive of more evils. This degrading vice is, unfortunately, very common. It is found in every rank and condition in life. It has its votaries among both the rich and the poor, among capitalists and laborers, statesmen and legislators, the learned, the illiterate, the old and the young. It numbers victims among fathers and mothers of families and their children, among genteel ladies as well as among hard-working women. Happy is that family which totally escapes its ravages. The evil has made such progress, that most

strenuous efforts are requisite to check its baneful career.

Let us consider intemperance, 1 in its causes; 2 in its sinfulness; 3 in its evil results, and 4 in its remedies.

I. The Causes of Intemperance.

The general causes of this vice are: the absence of the fear of God and of horror of sin, the false maxims that lessen its hideousness, the neglect of prayer and of the other means of salvation.

1. There are also special causes, the first of which is the bad example of the parents. Many children acquire this vice by seeing their parents drink, by going out to get liquor for them and tasting it out of curiosity. Some parents are wicked enough to compel their children to taste and drink it. Hence there are cases of boys of twelve or thirteen years of age, and sometimes even of girls, that are fond of liquor and drink it until they are drunk, stupidly drunk! Parents have a terrible responsibility in bringing up their children. Some parents, although they do not so directly cause their children to fall into this vice, yet do so indirectly, because they neglect to watch over them and to correct them. Many a drunkard would now be a sober man, if his parents had properly watched over him and kept him from bad company, or severely punished him when he first showed a fondness for strong drinks.

2. Our physicians, who, in general, are highly estimable and conscientious, are sometimes the causes, though not voluntary on their part, of men, and more frequently of women, becoming confirmed drunkards, by prescribing alcoholic remedies, opiates and similar stimulants. Although the patients at first use them rather reluctantly, they gradually acquire a relish for them, and soon become so accustomed to them as to feel, even after complete cure, a kind of necessity for them. This is especially the case with opiates and similar drugs. Hence not a few cases of women, even in high society, seldom going to bed sober.

Such a one feels no remorse, for, she says, it helps her to sleep well, and there is no scandal given. But the records of the divorce courts testify that scandal is given sooner or later. Hence it would be preferable, in time of sickness, to have recourse to the services of such physicians as are averse to prescribe such remedies.

3. The habit of drunkenness, like all other habits, is acquired gradually. No one actually intends becoming a drunkard; every one pretends to drink moderately. But constant moderation in drinking is exceedingly difficult, for it requires constant restraint, or self-denial; and this is an impossibility for many, who find it much easier to renounce liquor altogether, than to deny themselves any further drink, when they have already enough. Few, indeed, have the courage, the firmness to stop at the proper moment.

4. Many begin their career of drunkenness under the plea of necessity. "I must take a drink," they say, "because the weather is cold and damp, and I need to keep warm; because the weather is hot, and I work hard and feel very thirsty, and it is not good for me to drink so much cold water; because my work is very hard on me, for I feel weak and need something strengthening; because there is no danger for me, for I know when to stop!" Perhaps you do. But the question is: Will you always stop, when you know it is time for you to stop? The man who knows when to stop, enters a saloon to get a drink. There he meets some friends, other workmen. These all treat one another in turn, and drink to one another's health. Our moderate drinker who knows when to stop, on their invitation, joins them, for he does not wish to be upbraided with singularity, meanness, scrupulosity or the fear of his wife. He drinks and drinks to his own and everybody else's health, until he has lost the use of his reason!

5. Even among the women, among mothers of families,

are found a number who become intemperate under the plea of necessity. She feels weak, works hard, has no appetite, and must take some stimulant to revive or strengthen her. At first, she sends for it only occasionally; later on she does so every day; then again several times a day, until she cannot do without it; by and by she becomes an habitual drunkard. Or else she receives a visit, and not wishing to appear stingy, she sends for something to treat her visitors with; or she calls on a friend, on a neighbor, and is treated in like manner. Perhaps she at first refuses, but, being told it will do her good, or at least no harm, she is too timid to refuse. Thus she gradually acquires the dangerous habit, and then at times there are enacted in her home, on a small scale, the disgusting scenes sometimes seen in saloons.

6. Domestic vexation and trouble drive some men to intemperance. The wife is peevish, ever fault-finding and scolding, or habitually neglects the care of her household and her husband's wants; his home becomes uncomfortable and disagreeable to him. To find peace and have some enjoyment after his hard work, the husband takes refuge in a saloon, and his fate as a drunkard is sealed.

7. Another cause of drunkenness is what we may call *simple compensation*. A man, after a week's hard work, gets his pay on Saturday evening; he now wishes to have some enjoyment. He goes into a saloon for a drink or two. Finding the company there very agreeable, he stays there till the hour for closing has come, when not only his whole week's wages, the bread of his family, the rent of his home are gone, but he is even in debt to the proprietor, and is hardly able to find his way home.

8. Liquor is easily obtained on credit, but not the necessaries of life! Drunkards are usually very honest in paying their liquor bills for a very evident reason, although they often fail to pay the bills contracted for the necessaries of life for their wife and children.

9. Temporal despair on account of ill-success in business, of debts, of a death in the family or of some other misfortune. Some persons seek to drown their gloomy thoughts and their grief in liquor, because it makes them forget all their troubles for a time.

10. Habit is another cause of drunkenness. A man who has long and constantly indulged in excessive drinking, feels unable to give up the habit of intemperance, which has become like a second nature to him. He is never hungry, but always thirsty, not for water, but for liquor; he lives on it, and imagines he would die if deprived of it.

11. Want of shame. Every other sinner has some shame, some sense of decorum, and would not venture to sin publicly, at least not before those he respects. But the drunkard is lost to all shame, to all reverence, to all fear of God and man.

II. Its Sinfulness.

Drunkenness is a mortal sin whenever it deprives a man of the use of his reason, or proves injurious to his health, or is a scandal to his neighbor, or habitually leads him to other grievous sins. The drunkard offends God in various ways.

1. Man is the image of God. God is *knowledge, love* and *freedom*. These three divine perfections are represented in man's *intellect, heart* and *will*. Man is a mixture of two natures. As to his body he has the same wants as animals; but by his soul he is immeasurably superior to the whole visible creation and ranks only a little below the angels, for his soul is God's image. God's beauty and perfections are so great, that their very sight is sufficient to transport the blessed in heaven with ineffable happiness. The soul of a pure man recalls God's beauty and perfections. But the vice of drunkenness reduces man to the level of the brute by effacing the divine

image in his soul. No other vice robs man's soul of God's image; this is the sad privilege of the drunkard alone. The drunkard has *no reason,* for he has lost his senses and can no longer think or judge reasonably. The drunkard has *no heart,* no love for God, for his own family, or even for himself; he loves nothing but liquor! The drunkard has lost his *free will;* since he is unable to think rationally, he cannot will freely; he has not even sense enough to be ashamed of himself or to desire to amend. Look at him in his drunken stupor; he insensible; he is worse than a brute; nothing is more disgusting; even the dogs turn away from him in disgust.

2. The drunkard directly outrages our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for he defiles, degrades and disfigures the human nature assumed by the Son of God. In becoming man the Son of God exalted human nature above the angelic, nay, He, in some manner, even deified it. We are, according to St. Paul, the brethren of Jesus Christ, the members of His body. He is the Head, and we are the members. St. Peter declares that through Jesus Christ we have become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1. 4). But the drunkard degrades and disfigures the human nature exalted and deified in and through Christ; and by making himself even lower than the brute, he directly insults and outrages Jesus Christ in His human nature.

3. The drunkard ties up the hands of God's mercy and nullifies the merits of the Redeemer. Holy Scripture declares that God's mercy surpasses all His other works, and that He delights in calling Himself the God of mercy. Was it not to show mercy and save sinners that the Son of God became man, led a hidden life for thirty years, underwent so much labor, so many hardships and persecutions and, at last, died a most shameful and painful death on the cross? Behold Jesus on the cross dying for sinners after shedding all His most precious blood! But the drunkard ties up the hands of God's mercy towards himself, and ren-

ders useless for himself all Christ's humiliations, labors, sufferings and precious blood. Every other sinner, even when dying in the very act of sin, is still able to call on God for mercy and forgiveness, for he has his senses and the use of his reason. Not so the drunkard! When dying in his drunkenness, he is incapable of making an act of contrition, for he has not even the consciousness of the brute, and is like a block of marble! Experience proves that the drunkard, having lived in sin, usually dies in sin and is hurled into eternity totally unprepared!

III. Evil Results of Intemperance.

1. First, evil results to the drunkard himself. By excessive drinking a man injures his health and is liable to contract diseases which will bring him to an early grave. Moreover, he injures his own good name, for the good all hold him in disgust. He throws away his hard earnings, spending in a day or two what it has cost him hard work to earn in a week, in a month, or even in a year. If he is engaged in business, he neglects it, and will, sooner or later, be bankrupt. He alienates the affections of his best and truest friends to become the victim and sport of evil-minded persons who pretend to be his bosom friends. He ruins his domestic happiness, for there can be no comfort or pleasure in the home of the drunkard. He enjoys no personal happiness, for true peace and contentment find no place in his heart. He forfeits his liberty by becoming the slave of a degrading passion. He stunts his mental faculties, and gradually resembles a half-idiot incapable of making a proper use of his reason. The drunkard of some years' standing is a wreck in body and mind, an object of pity and disgust. He is no longer able to will energetically; he loves nothing but liquor; he yearns for liquor. He is utterly incapable of higher aspirations. Like the brute, he seeks nought but the gratification of his

beastly craving; and yet that drunkard was created only a little below the angels! O my God, what a fall!

2. Evil results to his neighbor. We are bound to love our neighbor, that is, all men without exception, even our enemies. The love of one's neighbor is the mark of a true disciple of Christ: "In this all men shall know," says our divine Saviour, "that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another" (John 13. 35). But drunkards, more than any other class of sinners, scandalize, insult, curse, ill-treat their neighbor, and commit acts of violence and even murder. The drunkard, far from loving his neighbor, seeks to destroy him both in body and soul.

3. Evil results to his family. A father of family is bound to love and cherish, to support and protect his family, and to make every sacrifice, even that of his life, for their sake. But at home the drunkard is worse than a lion or a tiger. He swears, he curses, ill-treats, strikes his poor wife and children, breaks and destroys things. Often whilst he is spending his earnings to indulge his thirst for liquor, his wife and children, half-clad and shivering with cold, are on the verge of starvation, of being turned out of their miserable shelter for non-payment of rent, or are lying on a miserable bed sick and destitute of all remedies and comforts. And what cares the brutal drunkard, so long as he can enjoy himself in a saloon with his boon companions! Nay, how many drunkards, more cruel than the tiger, not satisfied with disgracing by this misconduct their wives and children, with breaking their hearts and making life a hell to them, even go so far as to murder them! Even a tigress will expose her life to save her young; but there are drunken mothers, calling themselves Christians, who ought to love their children more than their very life, who will deprive of food and clothing their children, in order to have the means of gratifying their more than beastly thirst. Some have been

known, during a severe winter in a cold climate, to pull off the new clothing and shoes given by charitable persons to their little girls, in order to pawn these articles for liquor!

4. The drunkard is worthless to society. He respects not those he deals with, edifies not those who see him, keeps not his promises, follows not good counsels, insults those who admonish or try to correct him. The criminal records everywhere prove that the drunkard is the greatest law-breaker. To his family he is a deplorable misfortune, to his friends a cause of shame, to society a scandal and a burden. He is unworthy of trust. His very name is a disgrace.

5. Before the Church the drunkard is half an infidel, for he contradicts all good principles and breaks all the commandments. In fact, who is it that seldom prays? The drunkard. Who fails to hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays? The drunkard. Who neglects to hear the word of God? The drunkard. Who constantly curses and blasphemes? The drunkard. Who perjures himself? The drunkard. Who abuses and insults his neighbor? The drunkard. Who gets into quarrels and fights? The drunkard. Which sinner most frequently commits murder? The drunkard. Who is it that uses obscene language, sings lewd songs and tells filthy stories? The drunkard. Who shamelessly and openly by his impure conduct scandalizes the little ones? The drunkard. Drunken parents are known to have debauched their own children! What a crime! "It were better," says our divine Saviour, "that a millstone be hung about the neck of such a one and that he be cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of the little ones that believe in Me" (Mark 9. 41). Who lies and deceives like Satan? The drunkard. Who steals and defrauds his neighbor? The drunkard. Who neglects his Easter duties? The drunkard.

Who conceals his sins in confession? The drunkard. Who, on the very day of his confession and Communion, gets drunk? The drunkard!

Drunkards, behold the Israelites adoring the golden calf and dancing around it; those Israelites who had witnessed so many divine prodigies in Egypt and heard God's voice on Mount Sinai! What led them into this abominable act of idolatry? Drunkenness! Drunkards, behold the head of St. John Baptist brought upon a dish at a splendid feast! Whose work was this? It was the work of Herod, who had sworn to Salome to grant her whatever she desired, for he had been charmed with her lascivious dance. But Herod was drunk! Drunkards, do you remember what the rich man in hell asked of Abraham? He requested Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger into water and then to come and touch his tongue with his wet finger, in order to give him some relief. What was the cause of the rich man's fearful sufferings in hell? He had been a drunkard in his life, and he is now tormented in hell with unquenchable thirst! Drunkards, look up to Jesus hanging on the cross by the wounds of His hands and feet. His body is all wounds from the frightful scourging He underwent; His head is pierced with thorns. The Pharisees, the princes of the people and the rabble load Him with insults and mockery. For all this He has not a word of complaint. But there is one suffering He cannot silently endure, a suffering so intense, that He must have some relief. He thirsts! His thirst causes him unendurable pangs. Why? Listen, ye drunkards; because He wishes thereby to atone for your sins of drunkenness! Woe to you, therefore, if you do not forthwith amend your life and profit by your Saviour's sufferings, for you shall then have to suffer for all eternity unquenchable thirst in the unquenchable flames of hell! Such, indeed, shall be the doom of all impenitent drunkards!

IV. How to Cure the Habit of Drunkenness.

The remedies I will now indicate are necessary for the cure of this horrible vice; if they are properly used, success will naturally follow.

1. The first remedy consists in giving up at once the use of all intoxicants whatever. To say and promise that you will no longer drink to excess, but will drink only moderately, is an illusion. It was moderate drinking that gradually plunged you into this degrading vice, and what moderate drinking has once accomplished in your regard, it will accomplish again. If you are in earnest, give up immediately all use of intoxicants. If you have not the courage to do so, pray earnestly and sincerely for it to Jesus and Mary until you obtain it, as many others have obtained it before you.

2. In the next place, it is absolutely necessary to quit the occasion of drunkenness, and thus avoid all danger and probability of relapse, for, says the Holy Ghost, "he that loveth danger shall perish therein" (Eccli. 3. 27). You are not sincere or in earnest, if you persist in frequenting the same boon companions, the saloons as before. You must keep away from them altogether.

3. Thirdly, it behooves you to make a good and sincere confession, heartily detesting your sins and firmly resolved to die rather than again be guilty of the same sins, or expose yourself to the proximate danger of relapse. You must make your peace with God, if you wish Him to impart His blessing and constancy to your resolutions.

4. Frequent and fervent prayer is necessary to secure perseverance, for of ourselves we are all weak and helpless, and are unable to accomplish anything without God's help, which He will surely give every day to him who asks it every day in prayer. With God's help and grace we can do all things, however difficult they may be.

5. Perseverance has to be secured by frequent con-

fession and Communion, for these sacraments have been instituted in order to impart to us the strength necessary to overcome our evil habits and inclinations. In the sacrament of penance our soul is washed and purified of its sins in the blood of Jesus; and in the Blessed Eucharist we are fed and strengthened with His body and blood, united intimately with Him and enabled to lead a truly sober and Christian life. Why do so many repentant drunkards relapse again into that degrading habit? Because they do not go often enough to confession and holy Communion. (Recommend weekly confession and even daily Communion.)

6. As a powerful remedy and preservative the repentant drunkard should join a *Catholic* (*and none other*) Temperance Society, such as: The Knights of Father Mathew, The Total Abstinence Society. Some of these Catholic Temperance Societies are also mutually beneficial to the members in case of sickness or death. Many of their members have never tasted intoxicants in all their life, but have joined these Societies partly as a preservation against temptation and danger, and partly for the sake of giving good example and encouragement to their fellow-Catholics.

The faithful member of any of these Catholic Temperance Societies is

1. An honor to himself. Man's nobility lies especially in the development or improvement of his soul. The freer he is from passions, or the less he gives way to them, the more spiritual and angelic his life. The drunkard, as we have seen, has but few vestiges of man's nobler nature. Intemperance lowers and degrades him to the level of the brute, and, in some manner, even below it. To govern our passions, to assert practically the superiority of our soul over our animal nature, much self-denial is necessary. The faithful member constantly practises much self-restraint and overcomes his passions, which are trying to drag him down to the level of the brute; he is therefore

master of himself, a real freeman, and is truly an image of God, standing only a little below the angels.

2. An honor to his family. He truly loves them, and being able to save much of his earnings by his abstemiousness, he easily provides for all their wants. By his good life he reflects honor upon them, teaches them the practice of virtue by his good example, brings to them domestic happiness.

3. An honor to his country. He keeps peace with his neighbor, is a law-abiding citizen, deals honorably with all men, gives good example to the community and is charitable towards all.

4. An honor to religion. He is a practical Catholic, a faithful observer in word and deed of the commandments of God and His Church. His good example and virtue are a standing admonition and inducement to others to lead a sober and Christian life. He is, therefore, an honor to himself, an honor to his family, an honor to his country, and an honor to religion, and, therefore, he is during his life beloved by God and by men, and after his life of sobriety and temperance united to the other good works of a faithful Catholic, he has, after a death holy and conformable to his life, the right to expect our divine Saviour to welcome him in these words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mat. 25. 21). Amen.

THE VICE OF ENVY. (No. 1)

"Soundness of heart is the life of the flesh; but envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 14. 30).

So long as our heart is honorable, it will not be devoured by envy. Envy is an interior sadness on account of the welfare of others, a sorrowful feeling on account of their prosperity, as if it were a misfortune for us and their happiness a diminution of our own. The envious man feasts on and rejoices at the misfortunes of his neighbor, whilst the very idea of his neighbor's good health almost sickens him. When he beholds the blessings God bestows on others, he pays no attention to those God confers on him, as if these were of no account. His self-love is excessive, but he has but little, if any, love for his neighbor, for he is no well-wisher to him. And yet he has no true happiness for himself, for he worries and afflicts himself constantly on account of his neighbor's success and prosperity.

I. Envy is a vice, a grievous sin, for it is a transgression of the second greatest commandment, the love of our neighbor. In the first place, envy arises from a very strong selfish desire to monopolize all that gives pleasure, to enjoy alone all that contributes to render one happy. The envy of some has its origin in pride, that of others in covetousness, or in voluptuousness, or even in hatred. "And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt to drink the troubled water? And what hast thou to do with the way of the Assyrians, to drink the water of the river?" (Jer. 2. 18). The envious man is forgetful of all religious and rational principles, of the very idea of temporal happiness, which consists in the rest and contentment

of the heart and the moderation of our desires. The envious man casts aside, so to speak, the very ideas of a good God, the Giver of every good, of the love he owes to his neighbor, of the requisites of the social life on earth, in which harmony and concord cannot reign, if men are hostile to one another. "The envious," says St. Gregory, "should be admonished how blind they are in being jealous and displeased at the success of others, and how unhappy they make themselves by grieving over the prosperity of their fellow-men."

In the second place, envy is an unpardonable vice, for it makes the envious guilty of sin without their deriving any enjoyment or benefit from their sin. As long as our self-love, our ambition, impels us merely to desire and to strive to obtain the same goods, the same benefits and prerogatives as others, it is only a rivalry, an emulation, and may often prove beneficial, good and praiseworthy. "Be zealous," says St. Paul, "for the better gifts; and I show unto you yet a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12. 31). But if our self-love, our ambition leads us to be displeased and to be sad, because our neighbor possesses, receives, enjoys something more than we, something we cannot obtain or acquire, it is culpable jealousy, it is the vice of envy. "Envy slayeth the little one" (Job 5. 2). The envious is little indeed; there is nothing noble or magnanimous in him, but everything in him is puny! How unreasonable it is to envy another for having what we cannot get! How mean! And how devilish it is to wish evil to him on account of it, to wish he were deprived of what he enjoys, of what makes him happy, etc.! "By the envy of the devil death came into the world, and they follow him who are of his side" (Wisd. 2. 24, 25). Envy was the sin of Cain, the first murderer! Envy was the sin of the scribes and Pharisees; it induced them to persecute and cause the death of our divine Saviour! Envy can find an object everywhere. In temporal matters: "If you bite

and devour one another, take heed lest you be consumed by one another" (Gal. 5. 15). In spiritual matters it is even more dangerous. Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp. Josue said to Moses: "My lord Moses, forbid them. But he said: Why hast thou emulation for me? Oh, that all people might prophesy, and that the Lord would give them His spirit!" (Numb. 11. 26–29). How great is the envy excited even by shameful objects, and numberless are the crimes committed on account of them! "Let not thy heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all day long" (Prov. 23. 17). Envy attacks every one: equals, inferiors, superiors. "Every one," says St. Augustine, "loves his own excellence, and envies his equals for being his equals, or his inferiors, lest they become his equals, or his superiors, because he is not their equal."

In the third place, envy, whatever may be its degree, arises from the want of charity. "Some consider it a light fault," says St. Cyprian, "to envy those who are better off than themselves; when such envious thoughts arise in their mind, they are not on their guard against them, and, therefore, yield to them, and blindly rush to their ruin." Envy hates even the innocent: "Depart from us, because thou art become much more powerful than we" (Gen. 26. 16). "The envious man considers the happiness enjoyed by others as a misfortune for himself," says St. John Chrysostom; "being blinded by envy, he even considers his benefactor as his enemy." The envious seek to make others unhappy without making themselves happy!

II. The envious man derives only sadness from the prosperity of others. But this does not deprive them of what they have or enjoy. Sinners derive from every other vice some pleasure, some satisfaction, or some temporal advantage, but not so the envious, for, in the first place, they are sad and grieved, when every one around them

feels joyful and happy; they misinterpret their neighbor's actions and consider him as a hypocrite, his loss as their gain, and his gain as their loss. "The wicked man shall see, and shall be angry; he shall gnash his teeth and pine away" (Ps. 111. 10). No one else leads such a miserable life. "The envious man," says St. Bernard, "needs only to see others, in order to envy them, and he is tormented by his very envy." In the second place, he does not enjoy his own good fortune. "It matters very little for him," says Salvian, "if he is prosperous, unless others are a prey to adversity." "He that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good? and he shall not take pleasure in his goods" (Eccli. 14. 5). Thirdly, the envious man has no expectation of a change for the better, as far as he is concerned. He is, we may say, his own executioner. What benefit can envy expect? The envy of the envious man harms only himself! It cannot put out of the way those he envies. God will not grant his wishes against his neighbor. His envy cannot strip his neighbor of his natural qualities. And even if his wishes were carried out, his envy would not disappear.

III. We have just seen the interior effects of envy. But when it bursts forth into action, it is capable of every crime! The devil's envy caused the fall of our first parents; Cain's envy led him to murder Abel, his brother; the envy of his brothers caused them to sell Joseph into slavery; the envy of Joab caused the murder of Abner; it was envy that impelled the chief Jews to cause Jesus Christ to be crucified! Envy has caused countless murders and fearful wars, the terrible persecutions against the Church, the clergy and religious orders; and terrible civil wars have been the result of the envy of politicians!

Let us be animated with the spirit of charity, and we shall refrain from all envy of our neighbor. "Neither will I go with consuming envy; for such a man shall not be a partaker of wisdom" (Wisd. 6. 25).

THE VICE OF ENVY. (No. 2)

"These last have worked but one hour, and Thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burden of the day and the heat" (Mat. 20. 12).

How unjust the complaint of the laborers who had worked all day and had received the full pay for which they had bargained to work, in finding fault with the lord of the vineyard for giving the very same wages to the laborers who had worked but one hour, but had gone to work without making a bargain, trusting wholly in the goodness and generosity of the lord of the vineyard, and thereby deserving better treatment than the former! Their murmuring showed them to be full of envy, one of the capital sins.

Envy is a repining at another's prosperity or good, or anger and displeasure at any good of another which we want, or any advantage another has above us. Or in other words, according to Webster, it is chagrin, mortification, discontent or uneasiness at the sight of another's excellence or good fortune, accompanied with some degree of hatred and a desire to possess equal advantages.

Some are envious through pride. The proud man envies those who surpass or equal him, for he seeks to be above all, and feels happy or unhappy according as those he envies fail or succeed. Others are envious through covetousness, for the covetous man, being never satisfied with what he has and always wanting more, envies those who amass wealth and feels sad at their good fortune. Others are envious through carnal love, they love a certain person and use every means to secure said person's love and can-

not bear to have rivals therein, or to see the love that person has for their rivals. Sometimes envy proceeds from aversion, for aversion worries and angers a man when he beholds the success of those he dislikes. Envy proceeds also from hatred, from party spirit, politics, bigotry and other causes. It was customary in ancient Athens to banish by popular vote any citizen that gave umbrage by his talent and influence. One day Aristides, who was surnamed *the Just* on account of his great virtue, was accosted by an Athenian, who was unable to write, and requested to write on a shell, then used as a ballot, the name of Aristides. Aristides asked him whether he knew Aristides, and why he wished him to be banished. The Athenian replied that he was unacquainted with Aristides, but that it greatly displeased and worried and even angered him to hear everybody calling him *the Just*.

Envy is very sinful and leads to many sins and even to crimes, such as murder, and has often been the cause of bloody unjust wars. Envy prompts to dislike, hatred and other sins against charity, the love of God and of our neighbor. In the first place, it is a sin against God who commands us to love our neighbor and wish well to him. It leads us to murmur against God and His dispensation, and even to blasphemy, that is, to charge God with injustice, as the early laborers did the lord of the vineyard. In the next place, it is a sin against the love we owe our neighbor, whom we should love as we love ourselves. The envious man is guilty of dislike, aversion, and even of hatred, of rash judgment, detraction and slander against his neighbor, and sometimes goes so far as to commit murder to gratify his envy. Finally, the envious man sins against himself, for by his envy he worries himself uselessly, makes himself dissatisfied and miserable, and robs himself of all pleasure and enjoyment, as did Aman on account of the Jew Mardocheus, whom he envied and hated; moreover, he deprives himself of the sympathy and

charity of his fellow-men, who naturally are not kindly disposed towards the votaries of envy.

The envious man resembles Satan, whose special vice is envy, for he is envious of God, of the angels and of mankind, and strives to do them all the injury in his power. In like manner, the envious man strives to do all the injury he can to those he envies. It was chiefly envy that induced the Pharisees to plot the death of Christ.

MEANS OF OVERCOMING ENVY. In the first place, let us consider that God Himself distributes among men goods and abilities as He deems proper, giving to each one all that he needs to fulfil his special mission on earth. Moreover, God only lends temporal goods to men for the term of their life. In the next place, the more He gives to one, the more also He will require from him; the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility. Furthermore, why should we envy one another, for are we not all members of the same body of which Jesus Christ is the Head? Does the hand envy the eye, because it cannot see, or the ear because it cannot hear? Each member has its own object, its own operation to fulfil, which no other member can fulfil; they are, therefore, all equal in a certain sense. And so it is in human society, in the Church of God. And finally, let us consider that the vice of envy, which makes us like Satan, will, if not overcome, cause us to share his everlasting punishment!

Let us also reflect on what Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers teach us on the vice of envy. "There are diversities of graces," says St. Paul, "but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all. . . . Follow after charity" (1 Cor. 12. 4–6; 14. 1). "By the envy of the devil death came into the world; and they follow him that are of his side" (Wisd. 2. 24, 25). Envy begets "enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, aversions, sects, mur-

ders; . . . they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5. 20, 21). "He who rejoices at another man's ruin, shall not be unpunished" (Prov. 17. 5).

"Envy," says St. Cyprian, "sins against the love of our neighbor, treads truth under foot, disturbs harmony among men, and produces countless divisions." St. Basil says: "There is no wild beast which envy does not surpass in violence. Lions may be tamed by constant care; but the envious become more wild and untractable by friendly treatment." "Envy," says St. Gregory of Nazianzum, "is the most unjust passion against our neighbor." "Envy," says St. John Chrysostom, "is worse than war; when the object of war is attained, all enmity ceases; but the envious man never becomes friendly; he remains always a concealed enemy. There may be a good reason for war, but none for envy. This worst of vices has devastated the Church, produced heresies, armed brother against brother, shed immense quantities of blood, opened the door to death." "Envy," says Father Louis of Granada, "gnaws the heart, makes the body grow lean, torments the mind, destroys peace of conscience, fills the whole life with sadness, expels cheerfulness from the soul. When deeply seated in the heart, it becomes externally visible, by depriving the face of its natural color and pleasant appearance, and unceasingly torments the envious and thus he becomes his own just punishment." Like the crow, envy feeds on corruption!

"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13. 35). And we may truly say that envy is the distinctive mark of a servant of the devil!

THE VICE OF SLOTH

"Desires kill the slothful, for his hands have refused to work at all" (Prov. 21. 25).

Sloth is a vice which disinclines to labor, to exertion. It is of two kinds: corporal and spiritual.

I. Corporal Sloth, or Laziness.

1. He who is lazy hates work and will not work unless through compulsion. It leads to omission of duty and of necessary work; to idleness, and gradually renders one unfit for work, for anything good or useful; and to every kind of sin, for, says St. John Chrysostom, "idleness is the parent of vice; it is the devil's pillow," for the devil tempts the idle, the slothful, to all kinds of uncharitable thoughts and judgments, to lying and deceit, to stealing for a living, to drunkenness, to impurity. The lazy, the idle are disinclined to make any exertion to overcome the temptations which assail those who have nothing to do; hence nothing good or useful ever takes possession of their thoughts; and they yield to every temptation, and give themselves up to vice, as experience proves, for do not the criminals tried and condemned for crimes in the courts mostly belong to the class of those who will not work? Of those who will rather suffer hunger and cold, and be dressed in rags than even look for employment? "Man," says St. John Chrysostom, "naturally falls from sloth into vice."

2. Let us remember that man is born to labor (just as) "the bird to fly" (Job 5. 7). How much better off is the industrious laborer than the slothful man! "The sluggard willeth and willeth not; but the soul of them that

work will be made fat" (Prov. 13. 4), that is, contented and prosperous. Laziness does not promote health or contentment or prolong life. Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears. The industrious laborer enjoys better health, is more contented, not so sorely tempted and not so easily led into sin, because he is too busy to be much tempted, and he possesses the energy requisite to overcome temptation. Sloth is a worm gnawing at all the innocent pleasures of life. It is like stagnant water which soon corrupts. "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread (will always have food); but he that pursueth idleness is very foolish (wicked)" (Prov. 12. 11).

3. There is no reward without labor. Hence the lazy man cannot expect reward either in this life, or in the next. He is like the unprofitable servant, who hid his talent and was fearfully punished: "The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior (outward) darkness" (Mat. 25. 30).

II. Spiritual Sloth or Tepidity.

It consists in a disgust, a loathing for spiritual things; for instance, for the word of God, for prayer, for the reception of the sacraments, for pious reading, for pious practices. Hence the tepid Catholic seldom or never hears a sermon, or goes to Mass, or receives the sacraments; or if he performs any of these, or says any prayers, he does all this without fervor or devotion, only mechanically or by force of previous habit. To such a one our divine Saviour addresses this rebuke in the Apocalypse (3. 15): "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. . . . But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." "Tepidity," says St. Thomas, "is weakness or lack of disposition to do good and a disgust for things spiritual."

2. Signs of Spiritual Sloth. The tepid Catholic has still a horror of great sins, but not at all of the lighter

faults. He still does some good, but without due fervor; for instance: he prays, but only with his lips, and not from his heart; he goes to confession, but never amends his life; he goes to holy Communion, but with no effort to do so with devotion. He never, in all he does, has God, heaven or eternity in view, neither in his thoughts nor in his actions. He shuns the company of the fervent. He is like the seed the farmer cast by the way-side, or on rocky soil, or on ground covered with weeds and thorns.

3. "The slothful man," says St. Bede, "wills and wills not; he wills to reign with God in heaven, but will not do or suffer anything for God's sake; the thought of the heavenly reward fills him with joy, but as soon as there is need of self-denial, of overcoming himself, he draws back." Moreover, he lacks courage to profess and practise his faith; he is usually a slave of human respect.

4. Causes of Spiritual Sloth. It arises sometimes from corporal sloth; also from a love of ease and comfort; from unwillingness to make any efforts or exertions for spiritual things, although there may be willingness to make every exertion and sacrifice for temporal interests. Spiritual sloth also originates in sensuality or love of corporal pleasures. Very often it is brought on by frequent omission of spiritual exercises and customary devotions, such as morning and night prayers, saying the beads, hearing daily Mass, weekly confession.

5. Evil Effects of Spiritual Sloth. In the first place, it blinds the mind and hardens the heart for all that relates to salvation. "Tepidity," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "chokes up charity (love of God), blinds the eyes of the soul and enervates the will." Secondly, it leads always more and more to greater negligence in the service of God. "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully" (Jer. 48. 10). "We have often seen," says Cassian, "icy-cold men become fervent, but never a tepid one." Thirdly, spiritual sloth leads gradually to grievous

sin and even to enormous vices. "He that neglecteth small things, shall fall by little and little" (Eccli. 19. 1). It is like water which gradually undermines and ruins even most solid buildings. Also like drops of water falling one by one which, in the course of time, excavate the hardest rocks.

6. Means of Overcoming Spiritual Sloth. The first is serious and frequent meditation on the four last things. The second is to read and consider the examples of the saints. Thirdly, to reflect on the sad and evil effects of spiritual sloth in all that regards our eternal salvation. Finally, to resolve at once to begin a life of fervor. If we do not feel the courage necessary to do so, let us pray often and earnestly to God to impart to us the good will to make every effort, every sacrifice necessary to lead a life of fervor and to correspond with divine grace. Let us ask this through the all-powerful intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

AN EFFEMINATE LIFE DOES NOT LEAD TO HEAVEN

"Many are called, but few are chosen" (Mat. 20. 16).

The truth of this saying of our divine Saviour will become evident to us with regard to adults, if we consider the life of the great number of those who claim to be Christians, or followers of Jesus Christ. Theirs is a life of search after ease and comfort, after enjoyment and pleasure, after the gratification of their passions. Their life lacks the restraint and self-denial which Jesus requires of all His disciples: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mat. 16. 24).

1. An effeminate life cannot save us, for it has no conformity to the doctrine which we, as Christians, have undertaken to practise. Those who are constantly seeking to enjoy themselves in worldly pleasures and amusements, in plays and shows, in vanity and good cheer, in an easy and comfortable life, and who consider "having a fine time" as the height of happiness, never ask themselves how far such things may be lawful or sinful. Their only pre-occupation lies in finding out how to avoid whatever is disagreeable to them, and how to obtain whatever may be necessary to gratify their self-love, their passions, so that they may be able to turn this earthly life into a paradise. Such a life is in direct opposition to the Gospel, for it teaches us the necessity of patiently bearing humiliations, crosses and sufferings, insists on the necessity of doing penance for sin, inspires humility, preaches mortification, self-denial, hatred of self, and condemns a life of sensuality.

Our divine Saviour requires all men to love the cross to practise self-denial and hatred of self, to detest and avoid a sensual life. Therefore He says to the sensual rich: "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger; woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6. 24, 25). "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me" (Mat. 10. 38). Where can you find in the Gospel: "Happy are they who dance, who frequent theaters, shows, banquets, take many pleasure trips and spend their life in worldly pleasures and amusements?" Can salvation result from such a life, which is utterly destitute of all conformity with the life of Jesus Christ and is so opposed to His teaching?

2. Wherefore, such a life bears no resemblance to the life of the Model it behooves us to imitate. "Unto this are you called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2. 21). "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3. 27). Hence, if we wish to be saved, we must become "conformable to the image of the Son of God" (Rom. 8. 29). Let us place side by side these two pictures: 1, the life of Jesus Christ, His poverty, humiliations, prayer, self-denial, sufferings and the instruments of His passion; and 2, your life, a constant seeking after (and enjoying) worldly pleasures and amusements, good cheer, and vanity, wearing dresses that are costly and unbecoming a Christian and precious jewels, full of the desire of riches, esteem and honors, and of sensual gratification and effeminacy! 1, Jesus saying to all His followers: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. 11, 29); and 2, you unwilling to bear with your neighbor's shortcomings, full of pride and contempt for your fellow-men. 1, Jesus Christ was wont to spend whole nights in prayer; and 2, you often neglect prayer, and when you pray, how careless and wilfully

distracted is your prayer! 1, Jesus Christ said: "I give My life for My sheep" (John 10. 15); and He actually died for all men; and 2, you do not even give alms to the needy, but very often, by your misconduct, you give scandal to your neighbor and cause him to fall into sin and perhaps lead him entirely astray! 1, Jesus Christ says: "I have given you the example, that as I have done, so do you" (John 13. 15); 2, you do not imitate the example of Jesus Christ, and therefore you fail altogether to edify your fellow-men. And hence, how truly do these words of St. Bernard find their application in you: "Jesus Christ, my Model, hangs on the cross, and I lead a voluptuous life!"

3. An effeminate life bears no proportion to the reward for which our divine Creator has destined us, and which we should strive to acquire at any and every sacrifice. The road to heaven is narrow, full of thorns, very rough and difficult, for, as our divine Saviour tells us, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Mat. 11. 12), that is, only those who make great and strenuous efforts to conquer their passions, can gain it. The kingdom of heaven is also like a strong fortress, which we have to capture by repeated assaults. It is like a hidden treasure which we have to dig for; like a crown, or a kingdom, which we have to conquer by repeated and fierce combats, or to a triumph which we can enjoy only after a great war.

Let us bear in mind that we cannot enjoy two heavens, the one in this life and the other in the next. Since we are sinners, we are bound to do penance, either here or hereafter. There is no other alternative. The rich man mentioned by our divine Saviour, was condemned to endless punishment for doing what so many among us consider as perfectly lawful! No one can lead a life that is easy and comfortable and full of worldly enjoyments and pleasures, and a holy life at the same time! We cannot

be pious and please God and, at the same time, seek to lead a life of sensual pleasure. Let us bear in mind the words Abraham addressed to the rich man in hell: "Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life." (Luke 16. 25). Let us keep this saying always present to our mind, and remember that to deserve heaven it is not enough to be free from great and shameful crimes, but that it is our sacred obligation to do penance and deny ourselves everything sinful. There is only *one* heaven. If we choose our heaven on earth, we shall forfeit the heaven of the next life and shall have to share the sad and irreparable fate of the rich man who led an effeminate life on earth.

HUMAN RESPECT

I. Human Respect Is a Cowardly and Disgraceful Slavery.

Man naturally loves liberty and detests slavery as a shameful yoke. It is natural that the employee should obey his employer; the soldier, his officer; the sailor, his captain; the child, his parents; the pupil, his teacher; for in these cases the yoke is honorable. It was also honorable for Regulus, the Roman general, to return to Carthage, there to endure painful captivity and death, for his country's sake. But there is no slavery more base and disgraceful than that of a man who regulates his religion, his conduct according to another man's caprice; who inwardly approves what is right, but has not the courage to do it; who condemns in his heart what is evil, and yet does it, because others also do it; who clearly sees his duty, but dares not perform it, lest he thereby displease his boon companions or does not meet the approval of those whose favor he seeks.

Where can so despicable a slave be found? Not among Mahomedans or Jews, but among *Catholics!* Some of these are perhaps now listening to me. "We may, indeed," says St. Augustine, "conform to the world in certain matters, in certain things and customs that do not interfere with duty; but in the matters that concern our duties towards God, His holy Church, our soul, our salvation, our eternity, he conforms to the world and its spirit condemned by Jesus Christ, who allows himself to be enslaved by its laws and maxims, which are in direct opposition to the Gospel, shows himself, not a freeman, but a mean cowardly

slave." This is true more especially as to those who, through the merits and sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, have been baptized and made children of God, and "admitted into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8. 21).

Man's liberty is an inalienable right and privilege which God Himself, the sovereign Lord of the universe, respects and will never infringe. He, indeed, wishes and commands us to serve Him, but does not compel us to do so, for He wishes us to do so *freely*. He wishes us to go to heaven, but freely. Our freedom is but a participation of his own, for we are His image. He who is influenced and led by human respect, debases and disgraces in himself the image of God's freedom by shamefully subjecting himself to the views and caprice of his fellow-men.

And who are those persons whose disapproval you so greatly dread? Like yourself, they are as a mere nothing, formed of dust, a leaf tossed about by the wind, liable to vanish like a shadow, to wither like grass; they shall, sooner or later, die and become the food of worms! Moreover, consider the lack of moral worth of the persons you strive to please and to gain their approval, and so greatly dread to displease. In themselves they have no moral worth, but are vain and contemptible, undeserving of esteem and confidence; their views and advice in important worldly matters you consider to be without value! But when there is question of your holy religion and its obligations, of your eternal salvation, you dread their disapproving looks, their rude and senseless raillery! To stand well in the estimation of such mean and contemptible men you betray your conscience, you offend God, to whom you owe all that you are and have, you scandalize your neighbor, you forfeit your salvation! Why should you strive so hard to please such individuals? What have they ever done for you? Have they, like Jesus Christ our Saviour, ever shed their blood and died for you? Will

those persons you so greatly exert yourself to please, whose censure you dread so much, keep you from being condemned to hell or rescue you therefrom, after your condemnation?

And when you thus yield to their views and strive to please them in all things, do you thereby gain their love, their esteem? By no means; no matter what they may say to you, they, in their hearts despise you as a mean, base and abject man, devoid of principle and courage! Everybody, even the wicked themselves, cannot refrain from loving and esteeming virtue in those who have the courage, the manliness to act in accordance with the dictates of their conscience, and they despise, spurn and mistrust, in their inmost hearts, all those who yield to human respect! It is related of the emperor Constantius Chlorus, the father of Constantine the Great, that he one day called together the members of his court and the officers of his army who were Christians, and commanded them, under pain of being dismissed from his service and severely punished, to offer sacrifice to the pagan deities. Some of them apostatized; the others remained firm in their faith. Constantius rewarded these latter, but dismissed the former from his service, saying that he could place no trust in those who, for a worldly consideration, were untrue to God. In fact, experience shows that he who is faithless to God, to his religious duties is undeserving of confidence, for he is always the mean slave of as many masters, or tyrants, as there are persons whose criticism and raillery he dreads, or whose approval he seeks. "He who endeavors to shake off God's sweet yoke," says St. John Chrysostom, "puts on other yokes which are both degrading and unbearable."

We should imitate St. Paul's greatness of soul. He cared not for human opinions or esteem, for he said: "To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you or by man's day" (1 Cor. 4. 3). He was not ashamed to do

his duty before men: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel" (Rom. 1. 16). In like manner, we should not be ashamed of going to Mass, of observing the abstinence on the days prescribed, of going to confession, of sending our children to a good Catholic school, of decorating our home with holy pictures, of staying away from dangerous amusements, in a word, of leading the life of a good Catholic. Why should we dread the criticism, the raillery of men whose views are opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who are unworthy of our esteem, of our confidence? Why should we be ashamed of leading a good Christian life, of performing our duty, and be afraid of being laughed at by individuals whose conduct is a disgrace to true manhood? Let us not do as they "who said to God: Depart from us, and looked upon the Almighty as if He were powerless" (Job 22. 17). Let us heed the admonition of our divine Saviour: "Fear ye not them that can kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him, that can destroy both soul and body into hell" (Mat. 10. 28).

Of what advantage is it for you to enjoy the favor of worldlings? Is it not better to seek the esteem of the virtuous? Of the saints and angels? Of God Himself? "It is of little consequence," says St. Augustine, "if men do not praise me, provided God does; if men blame me, provided God does not. Think what you like of Augustine, provided my conscience does not accuse me before God." "Since God is to be my judge," says St. Jerome, "I fear not the judgment of men." If you wish to be a slave, be God's slave; keep His commandments, shun sin; be the slave of Jesus Christ, who loved and delivered Himself to the most cruel and shameful death to save you and procure you endless happiness. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2. 5), "who, taking the form of a servant, . . . humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death (for us), unto the death of the cross"

(Phil. 2. 7, 8). Let us be firmly persuaded that we cannot please and serve both the world and God. "If I pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1. 10).

II. Human Respect Is an Ignoble Apostacy.

It is the sacred duty of every true Christian to give to God absolute preference over every creature and, for God's sake, to be ready to sacrifice at once every temporal interest, every human friendship, when these clash with his duty towards his Creator. The Catholic who is swayed by human respect, deliberates between God and a certain individual; he places in the scales God and this individual, and he prefers the individual to God Himself! Like the Jews, he cries out: "Not Jesus, but Barabbas!" He prefers his temporal interests, his pleasures, the gratification of his base passions, his boon companions to his Creator, to the Lord of heaven and earth, to his greatest Benefactor, to his best Friend, to his most loving Father! He calls himself a Christian, a Catholic, pretends to believe in and serve God, and dreads only a wretched man's displeasure or raillery; he pretends to worship God, and yet he dreads a wicked, unprincipled, contemptible man more than God Himself! He is less afraid of committing sin, of losing his soul, of being cast into hell for all eternity, than of forfeiting some worldly interest, or of being ridiculed by those whose opinions and sayings he should despise! Is not such a criminal preference a practical apostacy in one who calls himself a Christian, a Catholic? We can understand the motive that induces a soldier to desert to the enemy, that urges a son, a daughter to forsake the paternal mansion. But that a Catholic should betray His God, his Church, his soul to the world on account of the censure of an ignoble man or set of men, is practically nothing less than an infamous apostacy!

God is your greatest Benefactor. What more could He do for you that He has not done, either in the order of na-

ture, or in the order of grace? God created you in preference to numberless other men He could have created, had He so wished. He gave you your life, your body, its five senses and their use, and an immortal soul with its faculties. He has given you health and strength, as well as countless other benefits. He watches over you with truly paternal care, preserves you from many dangers, and makes all creatures, both animate and inanimate, your servants. "And if these things be little, I will add far greater things unto thee" (2 Kings 12. 8). In the order of Grace He has done far greater things for you. For your sake "God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up" to insults, torments, and death (Rom. 8. 32). For you God the Son "emptied Himself," assuming our human nature, "taking the form of a slave." For you He was born in humility, poverty and suffering; for you He led a life of obscurity, toil and hardship; and, finally, after a laborious ministry beset with constant opposition and persecution, He died a most infamous death on the cross, after undergoing in His body the most excruciating torments, enduring inconceivable sorrow in His soul, and forfeiting His honor by being reckoned as an impostor and numbered among the vilest criminals. For your benefit Jesus instituted His Church and her sacraments, those inexhaustible fountains of grace and salvation, which apply His merits to the souls of men, purify and beautify them, and render them worthy of eternal glory. "And if these things be little, I shall add far greater things unto thee." Not content with doing all this for you, God called you to the true faith by baptism; through His loving dispensation, you were educated by your good parents in the knowledge and practice of your faith, and removed from evil influences; you have been many a time cleansed from your sins in the sacrament of penance in the blood of the Immaculate Lamb, and made partakers of the Bread of Angels in the Holy Eucharist. Truly God "hath not done in like manner to

every nation" (Ps. 147. 9). Verily it is easier to count the grains of sand on the sea-shore and the drops of water in the ocean, than the benefits He has lavished on you. He has, moreover, designed to confer on you still greater favors in heaven, where He has reserved for those who love and serve Him faithfully a perfect and endless reward, saying to you as to Abraham: "I am thy reward exceedingly great" (Gen. 15. 1). What more could God do for you?

But what does he say, who yields to human respect? "O God, I know all this; but I rather give Thee up; I give up the honorable and inappreciable privilege of being Thy child. I prefer to belong to the world. I rather please such and such companions than to obey Thee." He then cries out: "Not this one, but Barabbas!" "Be astonished at this, ye heavens! My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have dug to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. . . . Pass over to the isles of Cathin, and see; and send into Cedar, and consider diligently, and see if there hath been anything like this" (Jer. 2. 12, 13, 10). You now, as it were, put Jesus Christ to shame, by turning your back on Him; but soon you shall hear from His lips these terrible words: "You have been ashamed of Me and of My words, and I will be ashamed of you, and I will disown you, when I come in my Majesty as your Judge" (Luke 9. 26).

On the other hand, how admirable was the conduct of Tobias! "When all went to the golden calves which Jeroboam, king of Israel, had made, Tobias alone fled the company of all and went to Jerusalem" (Tob. 1. 5, 6). How admirable also was the conduct of the Israelites in Egypt. Anxious to escape the danger of falling there into idolatry through human respect, they said: "Let us go (into the desert) and sacrifice to our God" (Exod. 5. 8). How edifying the conduct of the early Christians in over-

coming human respect! Rather than yield to human respect, they shunned all unnecessary intercourse with pagans and heretics, and were ready to undergo confiscation, imprisonment, torments and death, rather than yield to human respect! And those who had had the misfortune to apostatize, in order to escape the loss of their goods and fearful torments and a cruel death, or who, only when overcome by torments, had apostatized, were all subjected to long and rigorous penances before being re-admitted into the Church and to holy Communion! And you, without being exposed to torments or to any real danger or serious disadvantage, are so weak as to apostatize practically, in order to please men who are undeserving of esteem and confidence, men who are the agents of Satan!

III. Human Respect, a Most Disastrous Persecution of the Church.

The terrible persecutions waged against the Church during the first three centuries of her existence made many millions of martyrs; but their blood was the seed of Christians, for their number increased with the number of martyrs, whose bodies alone suffered. The Church had, and has still, reason to rejoice over the great number of her martyrs; she honors these heroic defenders of the faith by celebrating their feasts, their praises; by erecting churches and altars in their honor, venerating their relics and proposing their examples and virtues to our imitation. But human respect, on the contrary, is the worst of her persecutors and robs the Church of numberless children and precipitates them into the endless torments of the infernal abyss. Human respect attacks the souls of men, corrupts their morals, weakens and even destroys the faith of its victims, drags them into hell, and thus renders vain the blood and death of Jesus Christ and the ministrations of His Church. Human respect causes the very children of the Church to wage a relentless war on her! Although the

Church does not undergo a bloody persecution thereby, she has every reason to utter these complaints: "Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter" (Is. 38. 17). "Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes? And I will weep day and night for the (spiritually) slain of the daughter of my people" (Jer. 9. 1). Human respect is the accursed murderer of the souls of so many Catholics! Hence St. Augustine indignantly exclaims: "Woe to thee, O stream of human custom (respect), how long wilt thou toss about the children of Eve in the great and dangerous sea?"

St. Peter became a victim of human respect, for notwithstanding his ardent love of Jesus and his firm resolution to die with Him, he nevertheless, swayed by human respect and the fear of the company he was in, shamefully denied Him. Pontius Pilate several times emphatically acknowledged the innocence of Jesus, and even did so whilst condemning Him to die on the cross; but he had not the courage to displease the Jewish rabble and despise the danger of incurring Cesar's displeasure. Incalculable is the immense multitude of the victims of human respect on account of the weakening and loss of the faith, the neglect of keeping the commandments of God and of the Church, the loss of innocence through bad company, profane and dangerous amusements, conniving at dishonest practices, etc. The loss of faith results not from arguments alleged against it, but from human respect and yielding to one's passions. "What So and So will say" often causes the shipwreck of the best resolutions!

Human respect is the idol worshiped by many Catholics. It is a dishonorable, contemptible and disgraceful yoke and slavery which the world imposes on its votaries. He who yields to it, is ashamed of Jesus Christ and practically denies Him. Of him Jesus Christ says: "He that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty"

to judge mankind (Luke 9. 26). Unless such a one sincerely repents and changes his life, he will surely forfeit his salvation. On the other hand, he who never yields to human respect, "he who is not ashamed of Jesus Christ," says Tertullian, "is certain of salvation." In fact, our divine Saviour says so Himself: "Every one that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father, who is in heaven" (Mat. 10. 32).

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

"Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me" (Luke 1. 48, 49).

These words uttered by the Blessed Virgin Mary in her canticle of praise are a true prophecy inspired by the Holy Ghost. At that time Mary was then an obscure, poor young woman living in the poor and almost unknown town of Nazareth in Galilee. She had been chosen by God to be the mother of His Divine Son, the promised Redeemer of mankind. She had given her consent to the divine choice by replying to the Angel Gabriel, God's special messenger: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word." And as soon as she had thus given her consent, the Son of God had, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, assumed our human nature in her chaste womb, and thus commenced the work of man's redemption.

Acting under the impulse of the Holy Ghost, Mary at once hastened to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth, to afford to the Redeemer the occasion to produce the first fruits of the redemption by sanctifying His precursor. The evangelist thus relates this wonderful occurrence: "Mary entered the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she cried out with a loud voice, saying: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For, behold, as soon as thy salutation sounded in my ears, the

infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because the things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord" (Luke 1). But the most humble Mary, averse to praise, referred all the glory to God, and inspired by the Holy Ghost, she entoned her sublime hymn of praise: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, because He hath regarded the (lowliness) humility of His handmaid; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me" (Ibid).

These words of Mary were a true prophecy, and her prophecy has had its literal fulfilment in all ages ever since in the Church of God. Her members have daily repeated and yet daily repeat the salutation which the Angel Gabriel had been charged by God to address to her and with which St. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, had returned her greeting, that is: "Blessed art thou among women." Mary's principal title is: "The Blessed Virgin Mary." Mary has in all ages, in all nations been revered and honored as "blessed among women," as the holiest of creatures, as the greatest, next to Jesus Christ, in the order of grace and salvation. We are, therefore, authorized by God Himself, first, to honor Mary; secondly, to love her, and thirdly, to confide in her and invoke her assistance in our wants.

I. God Authorizes Us to Honor Mary.

Who was the first to honor Mary? It was God Himself, for when she was still but a poor, obscure virgin, He sent her one of His most exalted angels to salute her in the most honorable terms and to treat with her concerning the greatest, the most sublime and important of His works, the Redemption of mankind by His divine Son. And how did the angel, as God's messenger and organ, greet the humble Virgin? "Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with

thee; blessed art thou among (that is, above all) women" (Luke 1). Read and examine the whole Bible, and you will find that God sent to no one else such a complimentary greeting, for no one else ever deserved such a greeting from Him who is Truth itself. Moreover, although God had been promising for four thousand years a Redeemer to mankind, He did not send Him on earth until Mary had given her consent to become His Mother. In this His greatest work, the Redemption of mankind, God made Himself, in some manner, dependent on Mary's decision. Who else has ever been so greatly honored by God Himself?

And Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary also, for from her He received His flesh and blood, honored her, loved her and obeyed her as His Mother, showing Himself the most dutiful of sons towards her. Such honor God has paid to no other creature, for no other creature ever deserved it. And all the honor we pay to Mary is only an imitation, a repetition of the honor God Himself paid to her, whilst she was still on earth. And why should not we be allowed and even required to honor her whom God Himself has honored above every other creature? Well may we apply these words to Mary: "Thus shall she be honored, whom the Lord hath a mind to honor" (Esther 6. 9).

Moreover, Mary is exalted above all creatures; she has no one but God Himself above her, for she is truly the Mother of God. God, as God, has, indeed, no mother. But the Word of God, that is, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, in order to redeem mankind, assumed our human nature: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1. 14), and thus became the true Son of Mary, and drew from her His flesh and blood; and Mary, having thus become the Mother of a Man who is really God, is the Mother of God, that is, of a Person who is true God. She, therefore, deserves that

we should honor her next to God. Wherefore, so long as we do not adore Mary, or offer sacrifice to her, for these honors are due exclusively to God, we can never honor her too much, for all the honor we can pay her is as nothing compared to the honor God Himself has bestowed upon her.

II. God Authorizes Us to Love Mary.

We should tenderly love Mary. Jesus Christ Himself has set us the example. He not only honored, but also loved, cherished and obeyed her as His Mother, and on every occasion acted towards her as the most dutiful of sons. If she was worthy of such a Son's love, confidence and obedience, she is most certainly worthy of our love also. In fact, we cannot really love Jesus Christ Himself, unless we tenderly love His Mother also, for how can we truly love Jesus Christ, if we refuse to love her whom He so highly exalted, so deeply respected and honored and so tenderly loved? Let us imitate Jesus, who is not only our Saviour, but our Model also, and the more we honor and love Mary, the more also we shall love her divine Son Jesus. Although He is true man, yet His Person is divine, and we necessarily adore Him as our God. From whom did He take His human nature? From Mary, the purest of virgins. If we love Mary, we shall love Jesus also, we shall love purity and chastity also. People often wonder, and even doubt, whether it is possible for the Catholic Priesthood and the religious, in their mortal and corrupt flesh, to live as pure as angels. It is not only possible, but it is actually done daily by thousands and tens of thousands of human beings, who are naturally as weak and as prone to evil as you are! How is it possible for them to do so? These angels in mortal flesh, frequently, and even daily, feed on the body and blood which the Immaculate Lamb drew from Mary, and they honor and love her in a special manner and place the chastity of their bodies and souls un-

der the protection of the Immaculate Virgin, the Mother of the Immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ. Mary's protection and assistance enables them to live as pure as angels and to devote themselves successfully with a heroic and self-sacrificing zeal to labor for the glory of God and the spiritual and temporal welfare of their fellow-men.

III. God Authorizes Us to Confide in Mary and Invoke Her Assistance in All Our Wants

1. In the first place, we have every reason to do so, because she *can* help us. She is the most holy and perfect of creatures, and therefore the most pleasing to God, the most beloved by Him. God, says the royal prophet, "will do the will of those who fear Him" (Ps. 144. 19). Holy Scripture furnishes striking proofs of this. God was about to exterminate the Israelites for their idolatry; but Moses interceded for them and God's wrath was appeased by his prayers (Exod. 32). God Himself told Jeremias how Moses and Samuel interceded with Him in behalf of the Jews (Jer. 15. 1). Judas Machabeus beheld Onias and Jeremias praying for the persecuted Jews (2 Mach. 15. 14). If God heard the prayers of these holy persons in behalf of sinners, of those who were in need or sorely tried, how much more willing is He to hear the prayers of the holiest of His creatures, of her who is the Mother of His own Divine Son! God, by His very divine nature, is all-powerful. Mary, by her prayers in favor of mankind, is all-powerful with God. Through her God gave us Jesus, our Divine Saviour. Through her Jesus sanctified John Baptist before his birth, through the very sound of Mary's greeting to Elizabeth, John's mother. Through Mary Jesus wrought His first miracle by changing water into excellent wine at the marriage feast at Cana.

During His life on earth Jesus was most obedient to Mary, His Mother; He fulfilled her every wish, her every desire. He is not less ready to grant her every wish,

now that He has exalted her and honors her in heaven above all the angels and saints. He can refuse her nothing. Just like the angels and saints mentioned in the Apocalypse (5. 8; 8. 3, 4), Mary knows our prayers, our wants. The angels and saints before the throne of God offer to Him the prayers of the men on earth. The Angel Raphael declared that he had offered to God the prayers and supplications of Tobias and Sarah. In like manner, Mary knows the prayers we address to her, and presents them herself to God; and God can refuse nothing to her.

2. Secondly, Mary not only is able, but is also *most willing* to help us. She is, in fact, more anxious to do us favors, than we are to ask them of her. If the angels are ever ready to assist us, if Moses, Samuel, Elias, Jeremias and Onias, were always willing and ready to seek the divine protection for the Israelites, how much more is Mary willing to help us! At the marriage feast at Cana, she gave timely help without any one having asked it of her or suggested it, for she was so full of charity, that she could not refrain from helping those in need. Just as her divine Son gave His life amid the most cruel torments and insults for us sinners, so, in like manner, Mary's love for mankind and her compassion for the needy, and especially for poor sinners, are so great and resemble those of her divine Son, that she is most willing to assist all who invoke her help; and the greater their need, their misery, their sinfulness, the greater also is her readiness to help them. The denizens of heaven take so deep an interest in poor sinners, that, as our divine Saviour declares, they manifest greater joy over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine just who need not to do penance! No saint or angel in heaven, no apostolic person or missionary on earth takes so great an interest in the conversion of sinners than the Blessed Virgin Mary, and experience proves that countless wretched sinners owe their conversion to her intercession and assistance; and this is so evident, that the Church calls

her the "Mother of mercy," the "Refuge of sinners, our Advocate, our Hope"!

3. Thirdly, Mary *must* help us, for she is our Mother, and we are her children. Jesus, when about to die, signified His last will. John the Evangelist, "the beloved disciple," was then the only one of His disciples present to receive, in the name of all Christians, the last gift the Saviour wished to bestow upon them, His own Mother. It was to each one of us that He said, when addressing St. John: "Behold thy Mother," and then addressing Mary, He indicated each one of us to her in the person of St. John, saying: "Woman, behold thy son." Mary, by these words of Jesus, then became our spiritual Mother, through whose hands the graces of His Redemption were to be dispensed to us, as the necessaries of life are dispensed to the children by their mother. We have not merely a corporal life, but have received at baptism a spiritual life to enable us to attain our destiny, endless happiness in heaven. Jesus Christ made His own Mother Mary our spiritual Mother, that through her we may live by grace.

The principle of the spiritual, or supernatural life, sanctifying grace, is from Jesus, the fruit of His Passion, of His death on the Cross. But in this spiritual life, Mary's is the bosom that bore us through suffering, as holy Simeon had prophesied that a sword should pierce her soul; Mary's is the milk that nourished us; Mary's is the maternal heart that always loves her children, however wayward or ungrateful they may be. Mary is the best of mothers, for, in order to save us her children, she willingly offered to the death of the cross her own Divine Son, whom she loved with a love surpassing that of all mothers for their children, for she loved Jesus not only as her Son, but also with the most intense and sublime supernatural love as her God. In thus offering Jesus to the most shameful and cruel of deaths for our salvation, Mary underwent a martyrdom of the most intense interior pain, grief and sorrow for our

sake! A mother has always a special love for those children, for whose sake she has undergone the greatest suffering. Hence Mary, the best of mothers, cannot repel or refuse to help the most wretched sinners that have recourse to her.

Mary is the Mother of Jesus, the God of charity who died for us; therefore, she cannot refuse her help to those who invoke it, however wicked and ungrateful they may have been. And, as St. Anselm says, Mary is bound to help even the worst of sinners, for it is to sinners that she owes her dignity of Mother of God. In fact, God chose her as the Mother of the Saviour of mankind only for the benefit of sinners. The Son of God became her Son only that He might be able to come on earth to seek and save sinners. Moreover Jesus in His last will made her our Mother, in order that she might always evince a mother's heart in our regard in all our wants, in all our trials; in all our misery, in all our sinfulness. Experience proves that Mary considers it as her task, as her duty to help us, for St. Bernard resuming it, declares that no one has ever invoked Mary's assistance in vain, especially in their spiritual wants. The numberless *ex-votos* in places of pilgrimage in her honor, and the many titles addressed to her by the Church in her Litany and other prayers are undeniable proofs of St. Bernard's assertion.

IV. What We Owe to Mary.

In the first place, we owe our love to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is the most holy and perfect of creatures, the Mother of the Son of God, our Saviour, our own spiritual Mother. We owe her also gratitude as to our greatest Benefactress; we owe her boundless confidence, for her power and her title of our Mother have been conferred on her by God, that we may always feel certain that she is ever able and willing to help us in all our dangers, in all our wants.

But it behoves us to endeavor to deserve her assistance by becoming her worthy children, that is, by imitating her virtues, so that we, as true children of our spiritual Mother, may spiritually resemble her. Wherefore, we the children of the Immaculate Virgin should endeavor to be pure, to be free from sin; like her we should be humble, obedient to the laws of God and of His Church, charitable towards our neighbor, and bear patiently with the faults of those we live with. We the children of the Mother of Sorrows should bear the sufferings and trials God sends us for the love of Jesus crucified and in order to atone for our sins and gain merits for heaven. We should, moreover, strive to spread among all over whom we may possess some influence, a tender love and devotion to Mary and a childlike confidence in her all-powerful intercession. Let us always prepare for her feasts by special devotions in her honor, and celebrate them by hearing Mass and receiving holy Communion. Finally, let us practise a tender and constant devotion to her and become her true and faithful servants, and we shall thereby secure our eternal salvation, for, says St. Alphonsus, "a true servant of Mary cannot be lost." "In all our dangers, temptations and trials, in every adversity," says St. Bernard, "let us think of Mary, let us invoke her." And at such times let us say to her with St. Germanus: "If thou, O Mary, forsakest us, what shall become of us, since no one is saved except through thee?" "Who is saved, who reigns in heaven?" asks Denis the Carthusian. And he replies: "Those for whom the Queen of Mercy intercedes." "He who is devout to thee, O Blessed Virgin," exclaims St. John Damascene, "possesses the weapons which God bestows on those He wishes to save." Let us, therefore, be her true and devout servants, her loving children, and prove it now by consecrating ourselves to her.

Act of Consecration.

Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in presence of the Blessed Trinity, of all the angels and saints in heaven, we this day choose thee as our Mother and we unreservedly and forever consecrate ourselves to thy service. We are resolved to honor and love thee all the days of our life, and to do all in our power to induce others to honor and love thee. O most loving Mother, deign to be our Mother and to accept us as thy devoted children. Assist us in our every want, protect us in all dangers, both spiritual and corporal. Hasten to our help in time of temptation, and especially at the hour of death, on which our eternity shall depend. Obtain for us the graces we need to remain constantly faithful to our good resolutions and to persevere until death as thy true servants and devoted children, so that, when this life is over, we may be admitted near thee in heaven to love, thank and praise thee, and to enjoy a blessed eternity. Amen.

THE END

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